GENERATION "FLY TO FLY": URBAN TRANSFORMATION, NEW COSMOPOLITANISM, AND THE POLITICS OF WOMEN'S VOICING IN DAKAR, SENEGAL

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ABSTRACT

Ali Colleen Neff: Generation "Fly to Fly": Urban Transformation, New Cosmopolitanism, and the Politics of Women's Voicing in Dakar, Senegal
(Under the direction of Christopher T. Nelson and Lawrence Grossberg)

The research from which this dissertation is drawn was conducted in 2009-2012 with women vocalists and other cultural and religious practitioners throughout the region of Dakar, Senegal, rural sites in the Sine-Saloum Delta, and the inland Sufi pilgrimage sites of Touba and Prokhane. Using a series of ethnographic methodologies, I approach the phenomenon of Dakroise women's sounding through the amplifier of media anthropology, in which sound, sensation, and indigenous discourses on culture and the arts illuminate contemporary Senegalese cultural practice. These contexts evidence the specific, cumulative ways in which music works for the women of Dakar. At the same time, I examine the broader current sociopolitical conjuncture at work on Senegalese culture, in which a global economic crisis, the mass migration and emigration of Senegalese young people, new movements in international Islam, and national political and legal strife shape the dimensions of women's creativity.

I argue within that women's vocal practice in Dakar constitutes a material cultural formation that substantially helps Senegalese people to survive and thrive in an atmosphere of postcolonial struggle. Drawing from a deep well of indigenous creative practices, the women musical poets of Dakar work according to a various series of perspectives, exigencies, and skills to bring resources into their communities. Their projects overlap in a formation I call a "body in

sound": a space of resistance, struggle, creativity, and possibility that manifests the life force of African futurity.

To Mama Diarra Bousso, *jërejëfaté.*

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PREFACE: A NOTE ON TRANSLATION AND INTERPRETATION

The research for this dissertation was conducted primarily in the Wolof language, the Senegalese lingua franca, which I studied, through the generosity of the FLAS program, at the SCALI African Languages Cooperative in 2008 and through the Baobab Center in Dakar in 2010. The orthography of spoken passages and contested spellings follows the guidelines of Sokhna Arame Fall, whose work is foundational to official Wolof orthography. Because the language integrates and Wolofizes French and Arabic words as well, I follow Wolofized usages, connotations, and spellings where appropriate. Often, I quote written sources, proper names, or pervasive unofficial spellings that differ from Fall's orthography; in these instances, I replicate native usage. Wolof verb tenses are especially difficult to translate to English, and translations are made to best fit the contextual valence and tone of the speaker's narrative.

I argue throughout this dissertation that contemporary Senegal does manifest a special national integrity due to historical, cultural, and geographic factors. At the same time, its ethnic groups (particularly the Mandé, Pulaar or Fula, Bambara, and Djola), overflow national boundaries. When discussing particular cultural phenomenon and influences, I intentionally refer to some as national, others as ethnic, and still others as regional, and Pan-African (or often in this last case, "African"). References to cultures of Africa, Africanness, and Africanity are made in reference to postcolonial theory, which acknowledges both the diversity of African experiences and its integral historical relationship to colonialism and discourses on Blackness. The term Diaspora is used, unless otherwise modified, to refer to the global African Diaspora.

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INTRODUCTION: SOUNDING DAKAR, SENEGAL

A long comet cry streaks across the night, a great noise
Sounds form the judicious voice. And the Man floors the Beast,
Talking in tongues of the danced song…
And the lake blooms with water lilies, dawn of the divine laughter[1]

—-Leopold Sedar Senghor

THE SENEGALESE *MASS SONORE*

Already, Dakar is sounding.

Even so, the city makes its introduction cinematically, in montages taken from the vantage of an incoming ocean liner, or a swooping airplane, or a page from a google image search: those grand images of the sublime African shore, a different world manifest in cliffs and sea spray. Like explorers or exchange students, we stand side-by-side on the grand seaside vista of Oakam, where this African coastline metropolis strikes an immovable image, set snugly into stone and local concrete: a muscular cartography, brimful.

Tumbling sienna beachlines and ambitious high-rolling hotels line the grand city as mad Atlantic waves, thick with fish and cargo, smack its high, cool peninsular rim. The great presidents of Senegalese independence cemented this coastline into place, and they have marked its postcolonial geography monumentally. These line up according to the aesthetics of the era: Senghor's hopeful, surreal sculptures; the tall cubist figures of the headstrong Diouf regime. And now, witness President Abdoulaye Wade's massive new tribute to what he calls *Le Renaissance*

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[1] Léopold Sédar Senghor was a Négritude poet and the first native Senegalese President. Taken from "Man and Beast," in Senghor, Léopold Sédar. *Ethiopiques*. Editions du Seuil, 1956.

Africain, as depicted in a family of three: a strong shirtless African man in a stern Islamic *kufi* cap; he pulls his lithe and apprehensive female counterpart pulled behind him as the wind whips her dwindling clothing. With other, muscular arm, he thrusts his calm, fat baby, thrust into the future located somewhere beyond, in the cool Atlantic winds. Its bronze entirety is styled to look heavy, as if chiseled into a mountain. It is rendered in the unlikely aesthetics of vintage Soviet propaganda thanks to determining contributions from the North Korean government, all broad chests and set jawlines. For a small fee, one can climb the long stairs into the sculpted cavity of the patriarch's vast head and behold the city and the high sea. Higher up on Dakar's coastal ridge is a lighthouse from which the ocean glosses broad, westward. We are as west as Africa gets, and we look out even further west.

At our backs and from the broad Berber Sahara, the East makes its presence heard in the Islamic call to prayer:

La ilaha illa Allah. Allahu__Akhbar.

In between everything, Dakar's essential sounds are those of the prayertimes that mark the city's daily cycles: practiced *muzzeins* stand with microphones beside the thresholds of countless local mosques, voicing the global sound of Islam in overlapping rounds as they contract the population toward the mosques throughout the day. They fill the hours leading to and from these five daily prayers with other song as the shoes of the faithful collect at the doors. These resound from its high, flat walls of mud brick and cement, grandly tiled, left in their original earthen textures, or painted smooth with all colors. They wind around from the mezzanine heights and into the city streets, and then enter the households that line them. They vibrate the eardrums of Dakar.

La ilaha illa Allah: wa Allah Ashad anna Muhammadan Rasulull'llah.

These sounds take on a polyrhythmic overlay in thickly-populated neighborhoods like Medina, where the calls of dozens of close-together mosques bounce from the bright murals of the Sufi saints that inhabit the city. The *dahiras* in which the Imams teach the pre-school children these same prayers, drawn from the holy Qu'ran and rendered in enthusiastic chorus, along with the shouted Arabic *Alif Bet* and the play songs of frequent recesses. Hooded Sufi prayer groups circle street corners here, chanting these devotional words in a cadence of their own as they work their religious *zikr* into the height of their sung devotions. In the crowded streets that most Dakarois call home, these direct-from-singer-to-Allah prayers are thickened with the sounds of so many daily lives, inextricably intertwined in communication: a *mass sonore*, or a heavy sonic tangle cast in the character of Dakar. Here, two cities: the infrastructural shell that marks the colonial foundations of the metropolis, and the everyday presence of life in the Dakarois streets overlap, compete, and contend in the public arena. The former juts from the coastline and cuts through the business of the neighborhoods as it imposes the order of governance and commerce, while the vastness of the latter--sprawling out of the urban peninsula and into swaths of *banilieue,* materializes itself in the city's *mass sonore*: the body in sound that is the subject of this study.

In Dakar, the sounds of living are as abundant as the piles of loose dust in the city streets; they stick between the materials of the infrastructure and connect the bodies that move through it. They fall, tumble and carry themselves in the dry wind. The dust of Dakar is thick enough that most of the city is molded from it; an endless supply blows in from the fine Mauritanian Sahara just to the north during the springtime gales of the *Harmattan* windy season. Young apprentice

masons sift this dust, wet it and dry it into bricks for building houses that are the same color as the clouds of dirt that surrounds them. In the vast portions of the city in which the crumpled infrastructural pavement is incomplete or has fallen away, this dust is the stuff of everyday life. Its Wolof name is *suuf*, and it is imbued with telltale colors, temperatures, and textures that indicate its history. Dark spots show where it has been overturned to bury waste or has soaked up other excessive wetness; toe-lines demarcate the edges of an ad-hoc soccerfield; the land near the marketplace is mottled with lost chicken feathers. When it cools in the dead of night, the *suuf* is said to be an ideal playground for supernatural *djinns*, who use their impish time to meddle mercilessly in human affairs. After Qu'ranic school is dismissed for the day, the dust sticks to the faces of kids who practice their wrestling moves in the streets: golden patterns on brown skin. Beneath their feet, the ground is embedded with the plentiful evidence of small parcels: little plastic bags that held ten cents' worth of bleach or candies, ground peppers or powdered milk. The sparing materials of Dakar are served in such finite measure; rarely is there extra.

In Medina, a neighborhood bursting with sound, the broad strokes of the financial-center boulevards dissipate and the jumbled particulars of daily life in the city emerge. Wolof, not the official colonial French, is the *lingua franca* in this and other heavily-populated neighborhoods down the coast from the monuments, where the workers and artisans crowd into inherited mud houses and rented rooms. We are at home, where elder *maam* (elders) sift and arrange neighborhood politics and where the younger women talk and listen at once, where rams and billygoats loudly protest their tie-posts in the street, and where this study witnesses as a new generation of Senegalese young people render their imaginations in the medium of the musical word. The strength of the city's life force is evidenced by the creativity that radiates from this

bustling community; sound is its index. It radiates from spaces that looking cannot access; hidden activities, backgrounds, private rooms and phone conversations. In the textures of the local soundscape are folded formal greetings, special prayers, and savvy market negotiations, cast in the percussive cadences of the Wolof language.

The local drummers are unloading their rumbling instruments from the trunks of dilapidated taxis; the sound is already contained low within them, and the slightest tap allows their eager voices to manifest. These are proud players from established *gewel* families: the bards (also *jelis* or *griots*) of West Africa, skilled and schooled in the arts of spectacle, song, and talking drum. Their sensitive *sabar* drums–the omnipresent traditional drums that are the sonic anchors of Senegaleseness–seem already to vibrate with other sounds of the city; any sympathetic vibrations will cause them to rumble. Local boys help unload them, and then snap twigs from the closest trees to tap out scattered rudiments of favorite rhythms as they walk. The kids know that, for the time being, this is their party, as long as they dutifully arrange the space for the arrival of the women. The kids and the gewels inscribe a circle of chairs in the center of the street by which taxis must squeeze themselves or abandon the way altogether. A hired gewel emcee tests and then speaks over a microphone, and plays favorite dance hits over a sound system as the kids dance in the circle they've created with the drummers, who are neighborhood stars.[2] The gewels converse, joke and begin to pour small glasses of *attaya* mint tea, as they punctuate their conversation with new drummed rhythms. They are wearing their best party clothes: clean bright t-shirts printed with the face of rapper Akon, images of their patron Sufi saints, or the shape of Africa, rendered in bright sequins.

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[2] An MC is called, in Wolofized French, an *animateur*.

The sound of a sabar drum is that of human voice; it speaks through and beyond the tones and cadences of Wolof and its harmonic surrounding languages.[3] It speaks over distances and through walls in rhythms that announce a wedding, the name of a newborn baby, or the arrival of an honored guest. It is an intersticial sound; the sound of the activities of gathering and winding through which sabar participants are brought together in collective motion. The drum stirs the geography of the neighborhood where it posits itself. It activates the rerouting of local traffic, draws women and drummers from their family compounds and weaves itself congenially with the sounds of neighboring events. The spirit that gives shape to this sound conducts the real world that surrounds it, and a good gewel family group is recognizable through its coordination and finesse in doing so: smooth transitions from the introductory cadences to the intense heart of the ceremony, rhythmic coordination with the myriad styles of the dancers, and the ability to maintain dance activity in the center of the circle. A system of sounding is instantiated atop the crumbling urban grid that was once meant to control the traffic of the neighborhood. That infrastructure has decayed through governmental neglect and becomes redrawn with the omnipresent rituals that are the lifeblood of Dakar.

While the rhythms of the drums (and drummers have many mutual memorized rhythms from which to draw) structure the evening at hand, their harmonics hum throughout the neighborhood, echo against the broad, thick dust-brick slabs of Senegalese architecture, and carry down the craft-market's corridors. The walls of Medina already ricochet with the sounds of Sufi devotional song, Islamic calls to prayer, and the crowing and baying of livestock as family

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[3] The Wolof language, Senegal's common *lingua franca* for numerous Senegalese ethnic groups, is structured around iambic units; each consonance is followed by a vowel so that the rhythm of speech itself holds important communicative potential as it is fashioned by its speaker into a rhythmic swing or a rapid-fire cadence.

members chat their way through dinner preparation. A group of sabar drummers gathered for a celebration sounds off-kilter, like percussive popcorn, to untrained ears, but a short listen reveals a series of overlapping rhythms that move in ineffable cycles. The sabar, when touched by a deserving stroke, has a robust sound, and sometimes a messenger is sent from the closest mosque to ask the gewels to pause their drumming for the duration of evening prayer. Even so, the ascent into the rhythms of sabar from the hum of Senegalese daily life is a matter of aural intensity; more a condensation than a difference.

The women begin to supplant the kids in the circle. They have had special clothing made for the occasion—a naming ceremony for the baby of a friend, a high-school graduation party or the return of a favorite aunt from abroad—and their clothes are meticulously designed, cut and weighted to accentuate style-in-motion according to the fashion of the moment. Themed closely around a particular color or combination of colors and rendered in shiny wax-cloth, these *yere cossan*[4] drip with bell sleeves and crystal ornaments, stretchy rickrack and floor-length skirts slits into billows of fabric that alternately reveal and conceal complex leg movements, fluttery lingerie and characteristic *mbin-mbin* hip-beads. As participants sit and chatter in their celebratory circle, the light is intermittently caught and released by the bugle beads of their shifting clothes to the steady popping sounds of the sabar troupe. Senegalese women sport a varying series of complex braids and coiffures from day to day, but for sabar, these often involve thick hairpieces with sensitive corkscrew curls that bounce with every movement as the women cool their faces with bright fabric fans, lean over their seats to exchange news and clap along with the rhythms of the fête. Ever-present local photographers and videographers weave

[4] Wolof, literally, “clothing of culture.”

throughout the scene, and participants pause for these collections with a cool, controlled poise that comes from a lifetime of learning which of their angles translate best to two dimensions. This visual assemblage serves both to highlight and superrealistically extend the loops and whorls of the dance, to contribute to a collective density of color and movement that marks a sabar celebration, and to amplify the confidence and complexity with which these dancers move through space.

As it assembles in one place far-flung sounds, materials and people, the party is winding to life; anyone who gets close enough will be wound into the spectacle, bound to greet friends and neighbors, to stuff a 1,000 *CFA* bill[5] in the mouth of the griot who sings her name, to dance a few lines amongst the assembly. As the sand shifts in the street, so does the sound of the gathering—it gains density as the party gains momentum. This thickness of sound is a matter of amplification and reverberation: processes of sounding and mutuality, being present and being together.

The sabar party materializes and maintains the form of a streetwide circle, but its character transforms from one moment to the next. As new attendees and activities shift chairs, its perimeters shift. When the women take turns dancing alone or in small groups, the sabar's center of visual focus varies wildly. The circle is further intersected by the power cords of the cameramen, sliced by the movements of gossiping girls from one partner's ear to another's, and inscribed by multiple dancers, each in her own arc of movement. The emptiest spaces between the observers and the dancers are filled with kicked-up dust and trails of flying fabric and braids. The beats of the drums decay into thick cushions of conversation and laughter. The drummers are

[5] About $2.00 American.

nestled into the circle of chairs, and the chief drummer faces them, his back to the dancers, a knot within a knot. Like the dancers, the group of drummers is constantly stirring; to feature new soloists. The center of the sabar is neither fixed on the griot's drum nor drawn in the center of the circle—it drawn and redrawn in the interstice between them.

A good musical turn is rewarded with hard cash at the sabar; money is stuffed into the mouths of the drummers, the mouths of the dancers, the mouths of the *taasukats*. Coins are pressed into the right palms of walking makeup salesmen and Café Touba vendors. The best griots will collect single gold earrings, silver bracelets and other light jewelry in a sack: a good dancer is wrapped in scarves donated from the outfits of admirers. Later, these artists' friends will greet them hoping to walk away with little awards of their own. Familiarity is instantiated in small parcels; between friends, resources are passed and transferred. These extra bits of flavor, style, movement and money are the currency of the sabar; they have the Wolof name *neexal*; literally, that which is pleasing, and indicates materials that are gratuitous, unexpected, or in excess to their intended function. While in one sense, *neexal* is extraneous and unpredictable in form and delivery, it is considered a necessary material to social living. A sabar itself is considered *neexal*—something extra. It is also a system in which women of all economic backgrounds redistribute small amounts of accumulated wealth (as few Senegalese hold bank accounts or have access to substantial income) to the clothiers, photographers, musicians,

coiffurists, taxidrivers, perfumers, and soundsystem operators who intersect in its creative nexus.[6]

The sabar is a *jaxasé*, (pronounced, ja-ha-say), an everyday expression drawn from the Wolof word for tangle that has become a common description of the cosmopolitan intermixtures that characterize contemporary Senegalese society. A jaxasé can be a traffic jam brought on by the recent movement of millions of rural Senegalese to the city of Dakar, a roadmap of the streets of a new neighborhood, the perfect mixture of traditional mint tea or the patchwork robes of the Baay Fall Sufi order whose drumming, ring dance and song recall deeply ancient practices of *cossan*, or multiethnic indigenous culture. For women, the aesthetic of jaxasé emerges in elaborately twisted hairstyles, exchanges of clothing and goods and the complex patterns of Senegalese textiles, but it finds its musical fullness in the context of the sabar. It is the moment in which the movement of the body and the sounding of the drum intertwine in the deft and beautiful tangles of the dance. A sabar dancer's entire turn in the circle lasts for less than half a minute, but the traces of its movement and music weave into the dense aesthetic atmosphere of the fête. The other Wolof words used to describe a sabar—*xew-xew* (literally, a "happening" that may be less formal), *spectacle* (from French, and often involving a staged appearance from a local music star), or *tanibeer* (a nighttime drum party retaining a strong sense of the dance's ritual function), point more toward the process of its assemblage than its makeup: always a circle, and a collection of personalities.

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[6] The utter complexity of Senegalese social and economic systems—as well as political, ethnic and geographic historiography–requires extensive representational space. I am interested here in a methodology of radical contextualism as described by Grossberg, in my representations of native cultural events and practices. See Lawrence Grossberg, "Does cultural studies have a future? Should it? (Or what's the matter with New York?)/Cultural studies, contexts and conjunctures", *Cultural Studies*, 20:1, 1-32.

We know the sabar has moved into its heightened register when the ring of chairs is abandoned by neighborhood boys and comes to be occupied exclusively by women. This urban space is transformed by a multitude of women, each possessed of her own singular style, each with a favorite rhythm. The sound of the sabar resonates through, transgresses and transforms a city that could never be represented by the lonely sculptures on the high cliff. The institutional Dakar that is too big to be made by hand becomes a distant image to this living city compelled by voices. The postcolonial Dakar is peripheral to this one: the one that lives and sounds.

This is Dakar, and these women are going to make music.

THE VOICE THAT MATTERS

From my seat at the edge of the circle, dressed in borrowed dancing clothes and sometimes balancing my recorder or camera on my lap, I witness this celebration coalesce from the substance of everyday life in the medina. The body of the event is in constant movement. I will spend the *sabar* trying to imagine the binding force that stands in its center. I do my best to trace the movements of women into and out of the ring. I climb the stairs of the closest compound to join the pre-teen girls of the household as we watch the party from above.

Contemporary sabar is a Dakarois phenomenon: an interethnic assemblage of people, sounds, functions and aesthetic elements. It is not a fixed ritual for one specific purpose, but a series of improvisations on a variety of women's life-cycle rituals: the naming of a new baby, a marriage, a high school graduation, the departure of a community member for work abroad. Apart from the austerity of the *Ramadan* season of prayer and fasting, sabars animate neighborhoods like Medina nightly. A thicker network of these emerges with every season as a young Dakaroises women, even as they negotiate a stifling national economy, famine, and

political turmoil, devote increasing resources to dancing through the night. As any local cabbie knows, the Saturday city ought to be mapped according to the movements of these women, in the sounds of their voices and their rhythms. They block the intersections as they please. The neighborhood is now instantiated in graceful interstices: spaces of co-resonance that mark the passage from one sabar drummer, one praise singer, one *muzzein*, one dancing woman to the others.

Outshone by the undeniable spectacle of sabar, the massive monuments that anchor the tourist map become insignificant and fade into a distant plane. The government buildings of the plateau, built by the French to handle the movement of local resources abroad, matter little to the movements of the sabar. Ritual circles of people kick up piles of dust to subsume the jagged urban intersections. Photographers and merchants dodge in and out of the crowd; taxifuls of celebrants arrive and roll slowly away. Even as the infrastructure of the neighborhood sees little traffic, and the streets, numbered and mapped by the city planners, crumble into open sewage and gaping holes, the women of the sabar remake them into another medium of movement entirely: a space of community, cast in the aesthetic materials of sound and spectacle, by which their lives stay in motion. This living infrastructure, this way of belonging to Dakar through ritual, movement, voicing and creativity, evidences a thick register of living *beyond* the conversation between the Francophone colonial powers for whom Dakar serves as a point of entry, and the peoples who live in its midst.

While its continued dependence on French economic intervention, telecommunications, and diplomatic support speak to the continuity of the colonial engagement, Senegal's Francophone postcoloniality is complicated by its relationship with a nexus of world systems:

Pan-Africanism, Islam, Transnational corporatism, Chinese investment, and a special relationship with post-Soviet allies. In contemporary Senegal, the historical cultural and socioeconomic disjunctures brought about by French colonialism drive a contemporary legacy of larger North Atlantic corporate interest in Senegalese resources. It colors the nation's transposed dependence on Southern economic superpowers--particularly China and Saudi Arabia--and its fickle relationship with Libyan oil and North Korean political investment. American military quietly inhabit the grand hotels on the Oakam cliffs as the pass to deeper destinations in regions of the Sahel inhabited by fundamentalist Islamic militants. Postcoloniality lingers in the microencounters between crowds of NGO workers, arts publicists, tourists, college students, and journalists and the cultural practitioners of Senegal, who must stage an elaborate series of marketable self-representations: the friendly dreadlocked mystic, the brightly-clad dancer, the soulful reggae singer--to access the resources that line these foreigners' pockets.

In contemporary Senegal, a drought-blighted region largely without marketable natural resources, postcoloniality inflects the tourism industry, the attraction and distribution of international aid, and the brokerage of Senegalese artists in the burgeoning international music industry. Postcolonial relationships govern the patterns of mass intercontinental migrant labor (approximately 4% of Senegalese live and work abroad), whose remittances and sponsorships provide an essential resource pipeline for African artists, particularly musical performers who travel in diasporic circuits throughout the US and Europe.[7] It guides the policymaking hands of the Senegalese government, who must cultivate arts that appeal to foreign cultural brokers whose activity relies on representations of West Africans as both needy and visually compelling as they

[7] Felix Gerdes, "Focus Migration: Senegal." http://focus-migration.hwwi.de/Senegal.2636.0.html?&L=1

animate aid posters, multimedia campaigns, and provide ground for the entrenchment of a rapidly expanding NGO aid landscape.

What the news reports, cast in the language of the wayward regime and its resistors, cannot show is the complexity of the Dakarois mode of living, and of the multiple political economies that articulate in any Dakar cultural event. Weiss, drawing from Mbembe's call for attention to that which receives "virtually no account in the eyes of analysts" of African culture, describes this representational slippage: "African subjects are objects both of celebration and sympathy. They are lauded for their capacity to context and resist oppression; they are pitied for their efforts to have their humanity acknowledged by a heartless world." [8] To correct this trope of reductive cultural analysis, Weiss suggests:

> What is needed, then, is some way of linking together various levels of experience and practice...the global distribution of cultural forms, and the restructuring of value production processes under the aegis of neoliberal reform, in a way that does more than simply focus on the fact of linkage itself. My contention is that popular cultural practices both permit and constrain people in specific social milieus to establish forms of interaction between themselves and with respect to a wider, now globalized world.[9]

This emergent global popular, then is not only contested, but also remade, "messed with," "tricked back on," and otherwise affected by the cultural creativity of the Senegalese and other Africans.[10]

While the contemporary iteration of colonial sovereignty is a pervasive force in Dakar, its geographic, religious, and trade affiliations also influence the movements of people or materials

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[8] See Weiss, citing Mbembe, for a discussion of the intersection of postcolonial theory and ethnographic work on African political economies. Brad Weiss, *Street Dreams & Hip Hop Barbershops: Global Fantasy In Urban Tanzania*. Bloomington, IN., 2009, Indiana University Press, 33.

[9] Weiss, ibid., 33-34.

[10] For more on the notion of "tricking back," see: Savigliano, Marta E. *Tango and the Political Economy of Passion*. Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1995.

through the space of the postcolonial city, in which Sufi organizations, underground trade networks, vast ethnic social systems, unconventional national alliances, and a thriving ritual world contend with imperial business. The mass population of Dakar and its satellites suffer the classic symptoms of postcolonial starvation: drought and a single-crop peanut economy imposed by the French bring on famine; the family system erodes as young men cannot afford to take on a wife and support a family and young women remain single in their parents' homes; an epidemic of joblessness at the hands of a global economic downturn that has positioned the Senegalese as notorious illegal immigrants to Europe and the US. In the last years of the mismanaged Wade presidential regime, the hope of national survival has come to near exhaustion. Ethnographic work witnesses the ways in which individuals and communities make life from these remains.

From the distance of the postcolonial vista, the dance of survival appears to remain grounded in the medina or *banlieue*: any economic wasteland outside the colonial city walls, as described by Fanon:

> The zone where the natives live is not complementary to the zone inhabited by the settlers...Obedient to the rules of pure Aristotelian logic, they both follow the principle of reciprocal exclusivity. No conciliation is possible, for of the two terms, one is superfluous. The settlers' town is a strongly built town, all made of stone and steel…The town belonging to the colonized people, or at least the native town, the Negro village, the medina, the reservation, is a place of ill fame, peopled by men of evil repute. They are born there, it matters little where or how; they die there, it matters not where, nor how.[11]

Fanon tells us that the historical conditions of the postcolony subsume the native medina through the drain of its labor, materials and other resources, leaving it only with refuse: ramshackle huts, lumpens, and "men of ill repute."[12] Thus exhausted of value, these postcolonial camps situated beyond the walls of the colonial *plateau* fade from the possibility of a robust future. Critically,

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[11] From Frantz Fanon and Richard Philcox. *The Wretched of the Earth*. Grove Pr, 2004, 4.

[12] ibid.

Fanon also finds that the cadence of postcolonial poverty is preceded by the persistent fact of the medina itself, which for all its reducibility, is the condition of possibility by which the colonial metropolis can exist. For its part, this study calls for the recognition of the life force of the medina as a critical counterpart to the colonial sublime. The recognition of this African livelihood by global popular movements, says Fanon, represents a series of resources critical to substantial African independence.[13]

While streets mark passages between physical destinations, the phonographic cartography of postcolonial Dakar maps a hidden complex of relationships between individuals and groups of people: a thriving and critical system by which these Africans realize their own livelihoods. This project takes this work of postcolonial studies off the capitol streets and into the unknown milieu of noise, excess and laughter. As Mbembe traces the ethical implications of cartoons and toilet humor, Larkin insists that we pay attention to the powerful material features of mass media technologies as appropriated by Africans, and Jean Comaroff and John Comaroff engage the magic of the lottery as a hidden space of political activity, this ethnography investigates that which goes on beyond the sublime infrastructures of capitalist control. In my study of women's musical practice in urban Senegal, I turn to fugitive, unconventional, excessive and "noisy" materiality to understand the registers in which the people of Dakar make robust, creative community life from little: a future from what appears to be nothing. Central to this study is the notion that such a futurity can be imagined, felt or sounded more readily than it can be read from historical events or news accounts. These materials are of particular concern to Stuart Hall, who

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[13] "This huge task which consists of reintroducing mankind into the world, the whole of mankind, will be carried out with the indispensable help of the European peoples, who themselves must realize that in the past they have often joined the ranks of our common masters where colonial questions were concerned. To achieve this, the European peoples must first decide to wake up and shake themselves, use their brains, and stop playing the stupid game of the Sleeping Beauty." Fanon, *Wretched*, 106.

finds, "The effect of the unseen 'work'—that which takes place out of consciousness, in the relationship between creative practice and deep currents of change—is thereafter always a delicate matter of re-presentation and translation, with all the lapses, elisions, incompleteness of meaning and incommensurability of political goals these terms imply."[14] This study attends to the ways in which, as the imperial mandate of postcolonial development attempts to establish global order, a multitude of powerful embodied voices work at the seam of survival, renewal and transformation. This work will demonstrate the centrality of women's voicing practices to this alternative cultural formation.

Dakar itself is a city of lapses and elisions that work themselves out geographically, aesthetically, linguistically, and experientially. Even as it wraps itself around the postcolonial business and governmental plateau, Dakar erupts at the conjuncture of multiple, permeable, maps and movements that overlay and compete with each other. The ancient Lebú fishing villages upon which the city is built line the peninsular coast; the low Medina that once quarantined plague victims and servants from the early colonial days is overcrowded with artisans, griots and migrant traders; European exchange students and NGO workers occupy a swath of land near the university; Saudi investors, high Islamic clerics and French expats people the cliffs of Oakam. The sprawling *banlieue* suburbs mark the passage for a migrant majority who move between the ethnic village and the economic heart of the city.

In the creative practices that saturate Senegalese life, the people of Dakar move in multiple economies at once; they critically manipulate the slippage between them as they use ancient Sufi trade networks to sell goods on the international black market, sell stylized ethnic

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[14] This political economy of aesthetic practice remains a mandate for Cultural Studies. Stuart Hall, "Notes on Deconstructing the 'Popular,' " in *People's History and Socialist Theory*, ed. Raphael Samuel, London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1981, 23.

goods from the countryside in tourist hotspots, and perform ritual music and dance for savvy national political regimes.[15] The Dakarois negotiate the fissures of the postcolony–the cracks in its economic systems, the opportunities for a little something off the top–to draw resources from the dominant capitalist plateau, through the artisanal neighborhoods, and into the Senegalese countryside that is otherwise beset with drought, famine, and crop devaluation. Here, collective survival depends on representation, the assertion of self amongst the slippage, and the creation of a contingent ground upon which individuals and their communities stake their claim in a landscape of dwindling resources.

POSTCOLONIALITY IN THE PHONOGRAPHIC REGISTER

Sound is not the hero of the narrative that runs through this ethnographic work; neither is it the villain. It is, instead, a privileged ground upon which Senegalese women stage a multiplicity of struggles with the work of modernity, and it hides a special set of subaltern resources in its folds. Even as it carries, in its most imperial tones, the words of the law and the voice of control, command, and neoliberal influence, sound also works wildly, as a medium of negotiation, subversion, trickery, elision, and confrontation, of pushing and transgressing, and of otherwise working upon the status quo. When it comes to the substance of life in Dakar, sound is the fundamental register of relationality. It is the basis of the recitative practices at the heart of Sufi Islam, the religion that joins an estimated 94% of the Senegalese population, and of the pre-Islamic rituals that are today practiced alongside or as part of organized religion.[16] Both of these

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[15] For more on postcolonial slippage, migration, and negotiation between world systems, see Enseng Ho, "Empire Through Diasporic Eyes: A View from the Other Boat," *Comparitive Studies in Society and History*, 46, 2, 2004: 210-246.

[16] CIA World Factbook, Senegal. https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/sg.html

influences animate any Dakarois sounding event as it puts into motion processes of stirring, winding, folding and co-movement.

Unlike the directional city streets that divide one side from another, the sound is inclusive; it fills uncanny spaces. One might imagine the system that emerges from this sonic network as a series of overlapping fields of social intensity that overlays the Dakar streetmap: a morning market crowd is a knot of shuffling clothing and shoes; a religious speaker's volume sounds the force of a deeply-argued belief; a respected woman *griotte* draws attention to her skilled praise of a local patron. Sound opens cultural studies to the less-visible landscape of everyday life; a hidden stratum of black-market practices, occult systems of belief, indigenous languages, and laughter upon which the projects of Dakar's artists materialize. The continued livelihood of the nations's casted praise singers, hundreds of years after the colonial dissolution of the regional kingship system that supported their livelihood, demonstrates the Senegalese dedication to the political economy of life-cycle rituals, and to the voicing that is their medium. Where they once blessed chiefs in battle, worked as mediators for the throne, interlocuted decrees and alliances, and recalled the noble history of their patrons, they today remind all within earshot of a neighbor's devotion to Islam; of her family's generosity to the poor; of her relation to royal dynasties of the interior.

Like the griot's transposed political economy, the dance of the sabar is made more than a frivolous denial of economic reality. It is a site infused with hidden power relations to which the people of Dakar dedicate substantial investments. In the textures of the dance, women work out a Afro-urban indentity-in-transit as they orchestrate the political economies of the government paycheck, Wolof caste patronage, Chinese textile sales, and women's ritual in a contingent and

moving body in sound. This is a study of the ways in which sound brings a multitude of dancers, a plurality of sabars, and a network of musical voices and communities into a complex of sounding practices that form the cultural body of Dakar. As I trace the activities of these bodies, I ask how individuals become bound up in this collective; I limn the movements of materials that secure individuals to this formation, and I locate the negotiations by which this body affects the neighboring bodies of first-world domination, national government, and global capital. The rich offerings of African artists and thinkers, whose work renders these activities material, discursive, and pedagogical, afford special access to this critical work. Sound is a fundamental medium by which the Dakaroises represent an independent *Senegaleseness*–unmoored from the structures of the postcolonial state–to the world.

Historically, French (after the Portuguese and Arab slave trades) colonial exploits in Dakar manifest both the racial violence of the slave trade and the urge to centralized command characteristic of colonial sovereignty, a system justified by French statesman Jules Ferry as a civilizing force for Africans in the broader project of global enlightenment and democracy. Writers of late-19th Century France invoked bodily metaphors:

> A great poet said a few days ago: "In the nineteenth Century, the white man has made of the black a man; in the twentieth century, Europe will make of Africa a world."[...]Thus, it has seemed to us to extract its own organ, which would make it known in all its details, would follow it in its development, and would win for it the effective sympathy of an always more considerable number of men of good will.[...]Our wishes will be fulfilled if we succeed in developing "in many hearts" the sentiment of the duty which falls to the white races the benefits of civilization."[17]

[17] The language of colonial rule has a close rhetoric with the cultural programs of many NGOs and "arts ambassadorial" projects in Africa today. From 1879, L'Afrique explorée et Civilsée. Paris: Sandoz et Fischhacher. Quoted in Agnes Murphy, *The Ideology of French Imperialism*, New York: Howard Fertig, 1968.

In the split between the African transformed into French subject and the entrenched *sauvage*, French colonists were able to claim universal enlightenment while exploiting native resources for the Francophone slave trade, and later, military, maritime and industrial labor. French sovereignty, dethroned in the Revolution, worked instead through the tricky legal system of Empire as various African bodies were subjugated or objectified according to the words and letters of law.[18]

For Mbembe, c*ommandement* is the articulation of a "very specific imaginary" of state sovereignty: the act of dominance that forces colonized bodies into place and then cements the resulting hierarchy of colonial difference.[19] As the centralized voice of concentrated sovereign authority, *commandement* is the audible component of the colonial sublime. Sovereignty comes in the form of the spoken word: a legal decree, a border declaration, or a trade agreement meant to be followed by specific and controlled action. Based in the North Atlantic political theology of the central, Godly, voice of command, colonial language mediates the establishment of right, the enforcement of order, and the inhabitation of subjectivities. Behind sublime curtains of seafoam and walls of manmade cliff, the dictums, decrees and discourses of postcolonial *commandement* are most efficiently deployed in the act of speech. At the outset of colonialism, sovereign speech was articulated in the initial generation or repetition of sections of legal code in a language foreign to Africans. Today, it is manifest in biopolitical regimes of representation, a phenomenon Ann Laura Stoler calls "imperial formations": "...dissociated and dislocated histories of the present, in those sites and circumstances of dispossession that imperial architects disavow as not

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[18] This is a point that Fanon captured early on in his legacy and explores especially in his Black Skin, White Masks. Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*. Translated by Charles Lam Markmann. New York: Grove Press, 1967.

[19] Mbmebe, *Postcolony*, 25.

of their making, in violences of disenfranchisement that are shorn of their status as imperial entailments and that go by other names."[20]

The medium of sound has always been essential to Senegalese creativity. The namesake of Pan-African literary revolutionary Ousmane Sembené's 1963 short film *Borom Sarret* [Boss of the Horse-Cart], spends much of the film navigating the sublime artifacts of the North Atlantic intervention into African life. In this groundbreaking indigenous Black African film made three years after independence, Moscow-trained Sembené depicts the Senegalese everyman as he circulates between his home neighborhood of Medina and the high plateau of colonial downtown Dakar. As a common worker, he is denied admission to the cemetery where he has gone to help a customer bury his dead child. Commanded by another client but without the proper papers, he visits the restricted territory of the city center, where he is awed by the order of the high pristine architecture and then humiliated, in the central Place de l'Independence, by a Senegalese policeman who demands authorization to pass. The policeman declares Borom Sarret out of order; his cart is seized, and he must return home, penniless and without prospects. In this register, the film's plot ends with the wail of a hungry child, to whom Borom Sarret returns without sustenance.

As Borom Sarret navigates the filmic physical infrastructures of the postcolonial complex (losing all the while), he also circulates within a cultural economy that is revealed only in the second, phonographic cartography of the film's soundtrack. This sound easily crosses otherwise restricted borders as it ranges from the sound of the village *muzzein* that resonates through the mud-brick of his Medina hone to the oboe-driven classical finery that shines like the capital city.

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[20] Stoler, Ann Laura. "Imperial Debris: Reflections on Ruins and Ruination." Cultural Anthropology 23.2 (2008): 191-219, 193.

Along the way, Borom Sarret's defiant, unspoken thoughts are narrated aloud in the film. He laments the likelihood that clients cannot afford to pay him at the end of the ride; complains when a beggar demands alms; and bemoans the loss of his horse in a heightened form of verbal complaint, or Wolof *kebetu*. In this common, but compelling, ritual speech act, he declares, "In this neighborhood [of Medina], I am a noble." While his appearance shows his poverty, the voicing of Borom Sarret's noble family name as transposed from the inland village, establishes his importance to community life.

Ultimately, Borom Sarret's power—a kind of power that colonial officials refuse to recognize, but which is potent in the life of the Medina—is established in the register of sound. In the film's stunning climactic moments, Borom Sarret crosses the path of a common *gewel*, who recognizes the cart-driver and, as witness, recites an extended *tagg*, or a ritual praise song for recounting royal lineage. The enchanted Borom Sarret hands his last few francs to the griot, smiling broadly, nourished. Thus complicit in the loosening of resources, Borom Sarret is doubly articulated: he is both postcolonial dead weight and a noble patron to his local community: drained of monetary resources, the Borom Sarret has been sung. Famished at a crossroads separating the plateau from the neighborhood, Borom Sarret is re-animated in his encounter with the gewel, whose presence introduces a subaltern economy instantiated in sound and voice.[21] He has no food, but subsists only on a single kola nut, a cultural edible that, even without any nutritive value, offers sustenance in the form of pure energy. He leaves his small sum of money with the griot and is instead sustained by the song. The film begins with the call of the *muezzin*

[21] This idea might be further explored through the lens of Marxian reflexivity, which asks about situated praxis, and illuminated by the Frankfurt school and Kant.

and ends with that of his screaming child, the primal sound of independence-in-motion, or the struggle of hope embodied.

For Sembené, the novelist, the filmic is ontologically secondary to–but inextricably tangled in– the registers of soundtrack and poetry. The real ethical action takes place within the material realm of sound, by which the plot of the Senegalese multitude survives and thrives. While *Borom Sarret* encounters the materials of the postcolony, Sembené calls special attention to both the sounds that establish and maintain these structures and the sounds that precede, pierce, transgress and trouble them. Sembené makes legible the superimposition of two bodies: the massive, congealed stores of resources that mark the colonial sublime and the busy material livelihood of the Medina: the monolith on the cliff and the multitude of the sabar in its shadow. Thus confronted with two contesting "reals," Western audiences will not recognize the important activity unfolding in the *tagg* scene. Sovereign sounds configure and are configured by the physical structures of the sublime postcolony—for Sembené, they are manifest in the Imperial court's trilling woodwinds as they accompany the awesome city. They do not, however, muffle the thickness of voicing by which the Senegalese livelihood is sounded.

Watching the film with a group of Medina-raised women elders over mint tea in my Dakar apartment, however, I am struck by the excitement with which my neighbors embrace the griot's song. My friend Diagne Sall and her three younger sisters, grand-matrons of their Guediawaye neighborhood, snap their fingers and whisper, "*Eskey*!" ("Goodness!") when he begins to sing, an index to the high cultural value of *cossan* (cultural integrity) Sembené highlights in the film. *Doomireewmi* (home audiences, literally "children of this nation") know well the bardic script and its powerful implications to the life of the Senegalese everyman.

Tributes to griots are a fact of life: they are rarely foolish and never voluntary, and the elders of contemporary Dakar teach young people to always uphold their obligations to the praise-singers. The gewel will return to his home to spread the wealth in tiny parcels: a packet of local spice, a tailor's fee, a gift to the Sufi teacher and cold cola for the neighbors. His extended family will eat. This occult economy of wealth redistribution, largely re-invested in indigenous and black-market materials, is one that the Senegalese enforce, comply with, and encourage despite its tendency to exhaust their dwindling pockets. Sembené, on one hand, expresses frustration with the forces of capitalist consumption and political stasis as he maintains the importance of occult economies of power and material redistribution: a theme as prominent in each of his subsequent films as the recurring character of the singing griot.[22]

While the body of Sembené's work condemns the damage done by the replication of formal tradition in dynamic historical circumstances, he also turns to moments of cultural transmission as a processes of subaltern power: these are the true subjects of his work, which he largely films in the indigenous West African languages of Wolof, Serer, Bambara, Djola, and Pulaar and, as if in afterthought, subtitles in the colonial French.[23] In *Borom Sarret*, the fact of the postcolonial order ultimately weighs less than fact of vocal materiality: voicing is worth its weight in silver coins, and identity is an act of articulation. In the Westernized/visual format of cinema, Sembené articulates a critical discourse on aesthetics, Africanity and affect that resonates with the postcolonial creativity of Africans throughout the continent.

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[22] See Ousmane Sembene's *Xala*. In Sembené's second film, *Black Girl*, in which an incongruous and, at times, self-animated African mask ruptures the domestic order. Ousmane Sembene, *Xala*, 1975 (Moscow Film Festival). And Ousmane Sembene, *Black Girl…(La Noire de…"Someone's Black [Girl]")* 1966 (Senegal).

[23] See, for instance, Sembene's *Moolade*, a critique of genital cutting and of contemporary African Islamic austerity. Ousmane Sembene, *Moolade*, 2004.

In his study of urban Nigeria, Brian Larkin locates postcolonial infrastructure in media institutions: power grids, railroads, and airports, as well as the aesthetics of cinematic spectacle, musical media, and filmmaking. Here, the unified visage of the former colonial sovereign–the British throne–is transmuted into imperial networks, images, and sound: a unified "signal" by which life in the postcolony is ruled. To this hegemonic signal, however, Larkin locates the life of Hausaland Nigerians in the textures of postcolonial "noise," through which the people of the postcolony survive and thrive. The practice of Media Anthropology requires an engagement with the polyvalent textures of African everyday life, a political economy neglected by neoliberal representations of an Africa desperately unable to properly modernize.

The media attention surrounding the 2012 campaign to disarm violent Ugandan warlord Joseph Kony–by the faltering and ineffective American NGO Invisible Children–brought to light the ready-made efficacy of visual representations of immobile, dependent and otherwise lost Africans in "need" of Western intervention.[24] Little of the NGO's substantial income, however, made its way to Ugandans nor toward political change or social support for Africans. The exposure of this group as a profitable vanity project for its young American figureheads made visible the ways in which conventional representations of Africa rest on bodies of different scale and character, most affected by pathos, passivity, or a secret, tragic flaw. The enthusiasm with which academics, news organizations, and young people alike reflexively adopted this cause–before the irresponsibility of the NGO's representations came to light–highlighted the effortlessness with which misrepresentations of African modes of resistance are adopted. In her work on Western representations of violence against Congolese women, Nancy Rose Hunt finds

[24] Christopher Nelson, echoing Mundimbe, suggests that this NGO's narrative is also a teleological allegory of Christian salvation, mediated by the "godly west," with or without the manifest presence of Christ. (Personal conversation).

that African bodies are most often examined in their cinematographic or plot content: exploitative film; famine and war; excised or partial bodies; disconnected from their situating contexts and knowledges. As she describes the obsessive repetition of images of African feminine disfigurement at the hands of colonists, she suggests that an ethnographic practice of "hearing and giving testimony" offers the opportunity to engage self-narratives in lieu of reinscribing the visual violence toward African women.[25]

A new cadre of contemporary ethnographers of African music document the specific politics of these forces of sound and movement. In her work in the South African recording studio, Louise Meintjes traces the political economy of sound as it works through the studio practices of European tastemakers in the production of South African music. In the heavy mediation of the contested "Sound of Africa," producers and artists renegotiate regimes of imperial representation in every tweak of the soundboard knob. In her study of musical mediation and its role in regimes of African representation, largely in the form of (self-described) World Music, Meintjes finds that invested parties use aesthetic media to interject values and ideas about Africa, tradition and culture to perpetuate their own, imperially-inflected projects.[26] At the same time, her work locates a host of strategic interventions on the part of Zulu musicians, who have "...mobilized traditional values and beliefs–such as being the embodiment par excellence of *Africanness*–as a means of engaging the contemporary world."[27] Here, she finds, they launch programs by which they could influence South African society during the critical

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[25] Nancy Rose Hunt ,"An Acoustic Register, Tenacious Images, and Congolese Scenes of Rape and Ruination," in "Scarred Landscapes and Imperial Debris" Special Issue, edited by Ann Laura Stoler, *Cultural Anthropology* 23 (2008): 220-53.

[26] Louise Meintjes, *Sound of Africa!: Mediating Difference in a South Africa Music Studio*. Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2003, 8.

[27] *ibid.*

transition from Apartheid to democracy. The figures of "otherness, Africanness, and Zuluness" activated in Zulu popular music serve as a critical point of negotiation for contemporary political relations.[28]

In his work on Congolese dance music, Mbembe describes African musical voicing as a series of material "sound forces" that work themselves out through the human body.[29] He suggests that Adorno, who he says would likely have considered Congolese music vulgar and frivolous "...would have been wrong, however. To reduce Congolese musical experience to a sheer auto-hypnosis of the masses without any aesthetic content, which neither embodies nor reveals any element of universality, is to mistake the very nature of music."[30] Mbembe finds African music a potent form of "serenity in the face of tragedy." In Congolese pop, he finds a radically anti-imperial materiality: "...far from resembling a narcotic religion which becomes more powerful as dissatisfaction with reality increases, this music is, on the contrary, a declaration of the most immediate faith in a life which is necessarily contradictory and paradoxical."[31] The ephemerality associated with sound suggests its ability to maintain itself as a largely unmediated popular force in the postcolonial medina, and a secret power by which Africans negotiate postcolonial circumstances.

A series of tenacious discourses obsessed with African disempowerment emerge in the global culture industries. The world music industry, in particular, benefits from the exoticization

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[28] *ibid*.

[29] Achille Mbembe, "Variations on the Beautiful in Congolese Worlds of Sound," in *Beautiful/Ugly,* ed. Sarah Nuttall Durham, NC: Duke University press, 2006, 74.

[30] It is important to note that Adorno, while concerned with the hegemonic force of the popular arts, also opened up their analysis to greater complexity and consideration of their anti-structural aesthetic potential. See Mbembe, *ibid.*, 62.

[31] *Ibid*, 63

of African music as it offers a representational antidote to the everyday modernity of commercial music without acknowledgement of its cultural specificity.[32] The notion that African artists operate from a space of *otherness* flattens the aesthetic contours of their work into an anemic binary: a reaffirmation of biological otherness that settles into orientalist video imagery and the grooves of record collections alike. Jayna Brown locates these discourses in the same utopian impulse from which colonialism itself emerged:

> The generative interest in and marketing of world-beat music shares a narrative trajectory with utopian literature. This narrative is familiar in the literary, and historical, imagination; adventurers, missionaries, or naturalists happen upon an ideal society of primitives, a utopia whose inhabitants lead lives of leisure and abundance. The cultural practices of the natives, their music and dance, are key expressions of their state of pure being.[33]

The easy cosmopolitanism of the European music festival and the American label showcase, accompanied by distant rhetorics of stagefront revolution, strike a disingenuous pose while a clear image of the oppressor to be "revolutionized" remains forever elusive. For the women of Dakar, the stifling figures of postcoloniality are in sharp focus: an exploitative tourism industry, a vastly corrupt national government, self-serving world music promoters, parasitic European corporate interest in the Senegalese telecommunications, power, and banking industries, persistent prohibitions on divorce and inheritance rights. This study documents a series of specific struggles of five Senegalese women practitioners as they configure and deploy their own liberatory projects in music.

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[32] This impulse to exoticization in the music industry extends back to folk music recordings of the 1950s and further through 19th Century practices of minstrelsy.

[33] Jayna Brown, "Buzz and Rumble: Global Pop Music and Utopian Impulse," *Social Text* , Volume 28 (1 102) Duke University Press – Mar 1, 2010, 130.

In this vein, this project engages the ways in which a multiplicity of bodies relate to other leaky cultural ecosystems: bodies of literature, thought, congregations and archives; unseen cultural work. They reveal the power-from-below that Senegalese women harness from their as they congregate at sabar.[34] The city is thick with microphones; it is a meshwork of sounds that cannot be controlled: seeping and unruly sounds of a richer density than that of the monumental landscape of the colonial plateau. Critical practitioners of the musical word theorize sound to be much more than a by-product of an event; in its action within the people of the city, it is the primary material force: Senghor's "danced song" to which the event is a passing moment in a chain of realization. From the soundscape of the Dakar street, the voices of millions of mothers overtake the imperial commands of the head of state.

From my chair in the sabar circle, I hear the voice of the artist, the African woman, who pushes the collectivity into a new register. From the drummers' corner of activity, the woman griotte raises her voice into the heart of this tangle is a voice and shouts to the célèbre, "Affair bii yow la!" ("This celebration is you!")

The next dancer, a young woman from a musical griot family, has been waiting for the perfect storm of inspiration, intensity, and the right rhythm, measured in her relative position to the dancers that have gone before. She finds a clear path from her rented plastic chair to the center of the circle, and the last dancer stumbling to her seat in faux post-dance shyness. The singer at the far end of the party has finished her praises of the honored guest. Everyone at the party knows that her cousin has honored her by naming a new niece after her, and she is excited to show off the new, adult style she's put together with the money she's earned from selling the

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[34] Rosi Braidotti equates this kind of popular power with Hardt and Negri's potentia. In *Metamorphoses: Towards a Materialist Theory of Becoming*. Cambridge: Polity Press, 2002, 70.

best couscous at the local market. Spangled and topped with a shoulder-length *mesh* weave, she calls her style "Viday" after the famous Indian soap actress. Her favorite drummer–a neighbor with a sensitive, reliable touch–fronts the sabar group tonight, and he's just now ramping into a new rhythm that suits her. She leans forward as girlfriends on either side push her out of her chair. Things are just right for a strong turn and maximum impact.

Our dancer springs into the circle from her chair as if compelled by something uncontainable within her, but even as she does so, she must not let her face indicate that she is anything but completely controlled and cool. She falls into the classic *ceebu jën* dance pattern, shins like this and that, palms up in the air. This part of the dance maps the dancer's space and punctuates her personality. Once its clear that she's established the pattern, she begins to switch things up. She adds a little flourish from the dance she's seen on her Hindi soap. Now she breaks from following the drummer: something has changed. The authorship is flowing in a new direction: it shifts to the dancer, and the drummer is now to follow. She looks to the drummer to be sure he's getting this down, and he dutifully plays her dance on his drum. The natal moment of her self-invention is instantiated in this new rhythm, all her own. For a turn, she commands the party.

She invents a *bakk* of her own. She materializes her idea with finesse, and it gains gravity as the circle of women award her creativity: they tie scarves around her head and waist and bracelets on her wrist. They stuff small bills in her mouth. Another three dancers spring into the circle to celebrate her feat. When she returns to the makeup of the ring, a friend points her thumb onto the top of the dancer's head and turns it, like winding up a toy. It's an age-old joke with a classic Wolof self-effacing edge: the dancer is so noble that her friends must pretend to squish

any louse that would crawl on her. She has made this party into a cadence of her own; one that only she could anticipate; a new register, a new party. The center of (attention in) the sabar circle is a point of sensorial natality. A ventriloquism of movement and sign, the sabar is the medium for the materialization of an unconventional social idea through voice: a life not necessarily obvious to the eye, but always evident through close attention to the work of affect.

BODIES IN SOUND

Hundreds strong, the sabar entangles griots, tassoukats, singers, dancers and drummers. Materials fly and fall: dust, broken baguettes, costumes pulled apart, and scarves thrown at the dancers, who dance so hard that braids detach from coiffures and bracelets decompose and spin off colorful jewels. The ground beneath the dancers' feet is churned into the lighter color of the cool dust below; the ground is unfixed: shifting. The gewels pick up chunks of concrete, fallen from nearby buildings, and pound drum pegs into the sides of the drums as they play. The goatskin tightens and the drum pitch temporarily rises and clarifies. Colliding, the pegs and the concrete decompose each other so that the drumskin will tighten back to full tonal clarity, and then fall away again. The structure of the rhythms, the dance, and the party play in the contrast between these processes of decay and articulation. The dancing women point their fingers in the air and then widen their eyes with fierceness and hilarity; they tell the drummers how and what to play. The drummers are instruments of punctuation, and even the littlest girls boss them around as the boys sit atop tin buildings and peer through windows. One by one, the women and girls take their turn in the circle. Each woman's rhythm, sounded through the drummer, echoes through the corridors of the crowded city as she writes herself into the cityscape. These processes

of regulation, circulation, regeneration and integrality map Dakar like they map the living organism.

Imagine the dancer's body in sound: at the sabar, in the Medina streets, the dancer inscribes herself into the center of the circle. In the loops and whorls of her legs and arms, her mimesis of a work posture, the spicy attitude ("*saff*") of her clothing and facial expressions, she positions herself differentially amidst the rings of bodies, maps herself into Dakar, and stakes her claim. Her dance is more than a jaunt in the spotlight: it manifests a critical ethics of creativity in a postcolonial situation by which African women are often represented as passive, suffering, and hopeless. Hers is a body suspended in the sound of the sabar: caught up in a series of networks that converge in her dance, and at the same time, positioned in a space of self-making in which she uses her power of creativity to make a space of her own.

Now imagine the transindividual body in sound that is the sabar: the collective co-movement of bodies, resources, and sounds that compose the event. The sabar, for all its myriad participants and elements, is also a discrete cultural formation of its own: a complex, functioning body lined with a circular membrane of seated onlookers, a drive to preserve itself by wrapping all within earshot in its circle, a character cast in the colors of tailored robes and a life force of dance and drum. The sabar is a life that collects around a sound and then sustains itself. Its materials coalesce with the drum stroke and the movement of dancers through the air as the crowd thickens the circle, street vendors haul their café pitchers and bags of beignets, and any loose coins are shaken loose from neighborhood purses. The sabar embodies the Deleuzian concept of the body-in-assemblage: "lines of articulation or segmentarity, strata and territories; but also lines of flight, movements of deterritorialization and destratification. Comparative rates

of flow on these lines produce phenomena of relative slowness and viscosity, or, on the contrary, of acceleration and rupture. All this, lines and measurable speeds."[35]

To uncover the ways in which Senegalese women's music-making matters, I turn to Spinoza as taken up by Balibar to imagine the politics of a *body in sound*. Here, events of sounding work as affective processes by which one body (in this case, the complex of the sabar, or more broadly, the world of women's sounding in Dakar) affects another (the everyday economic business of the city, for instance, or global representations of African women).[36] Like all bodies by which the world is composed, the sabar is made up of a variety of materials that come together in relation to each other: the drums and chairs, street merchants' goods and the small change that buys them, the dust of the street, gossip and exchange, and the individuals who participate in the dancing (of course, these people simultaneously belong to other social bodies such as their families or neighborhoods and so only *partially* contribute themselves to the sabar). The sabar is a material formation that, for its duration, strives to preserve itself in relation to other bodies: it steals women away from housework, disrupts the flow of traffic, drowns out neighboring sabar with a better set of drummers. It finds nourishment in forms of social

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[35] Massumi discusses processes of assemblage in his introduction to Deleuze and Guattari's One Thousand Plateaus: "In a book, as in all things, there are lines of articulation or segmentarity, strata and territories; but also lines of flight, movements of deterritorialization and destratification. Comparative rates of flow on these lines produce phenomena of relative slowness and viscosity, or, on the contrary, of acceleration and rupture. All this, lines and measurable speeds constitutes an assemblage. A book is an assemblage of this kind, and as such is unattributable. It is a multiplicity—but we don't know yet what the multiple entails when it is no longer attributed, that is, after it has been elevated to the status of the substantive. On side of a machinic assemblage faces the strata, which doubtless make it a kind of organism, or signifying totality, or determination attributable to a subject; it also has a side facing a body without organs, which is continually dismantling the organism, causing asignifying particles or pure intensities or circulate, and attributing to itself subjects what it leaves with nothing more than a name as the trace of an intensity... Literature is an assemblage. It has nothing to do with ideology. There is no ideology and never has been." Brian Massumi, "Introduction." In Deleuze, G. and Guattari, F. *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, Minneapolis: U of Minnesota, 1987, 3-4.

[36] Etienne Balibar. *Spinoza and Politics*. Translated by Pete Snowdon. New York: Verso Books, 1998.

investment, stability in its emergent organizational structure, and integrity in the form of a group ethic of celebration by which its participants remain bound to the project. In tandem with thousands of other such events, the sabar–and the movements of material resources that accompany it–contend with the systems of resource distribution, mobility, and power established by the postcolonial state. Besides the immediate benefit of wealth redistribution, the body that is sonic Dakar, made up of sabars, praise rituals, street festivals, Islamic calls to prayer, broadcast towers and transistors, offers a platform by which the people of Dakar establish possibilities for life. The Dakarois body in sound contends with the body of the Senegalese state in its disruption and reordering of the socioeconomic status quo. It also offers a critical space for self-representation by women who otherwise struggle to access the global stage.[37]

While the variously parasitic economic policies of the Senegalese state draw attention from American and European new outlets, the activity of the Senegalese people escapes the gaze of foreign representation.[38] The concept of a body in sound allows us both to richly and radically contextualize Dakaroises women's speech in the context of its own economic terms, while also couching the question of how the musical word could matter in the context of postcolonial/ hegemonic systems. Dakar is a contested space in which a number of bodies stake claims in a spectrum of registers. This work begins with the question of how world systems affect and are affected by other kinds of cultural, theological, aesthetic and personal formations, and what

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[37] At the same time, different bodies also share elements between them, but these materials move at different temporalities in each of these situations. As a coin circulates slowly through the broader Senegalese national economy, eventually adding to the revenues of banks, taxes, and grifting governmental office, it also flips quickly through the informal economy from a sabar participant to a photographer, to a café seller, and to the local rice merchant.

[38] The body of Senegalese postcolonial rule is structured on the Hobbesnian European model of sovereign authority, in which the various social organs (workers, precinct leaders, banks, social institutions) are beholden to the head of state.

modes those formations take. It focuses on the ontological unit of the body as a basis for engaging the substance of women's cultural practice in Senegal. Here, a body is defined as a formation with an interiority and exteriority; a striving to self-preservation; and an affective capacity that structures its relationships to other bodies.[39] Spinoza, an early theorist of the political realm of affect, locates power in the capacity of a body to affect and be affected positively by others, and politics in the ethics by which bodies engage in co-affective practices by which they ensure mutual preservation.[40]

Taken together, the case studies that I gather here illustrate the ways in which the total assemblage of women's urban sounding practices, while establishing a viable ecology of sustenance, exerts significant affect upon the body of empire as it entrenches itself the landscape of the Senegalese postcolony. The political registers of this musicmaking, however, lie in layers of affect less evident than the street protest that anchors conventional studies of African youth politics. Jayna Brown describes the West African impulse to popular noisemaking in terms of Bloch's "anticipatory illumination": "off-label uses of technology and of the body as a site for constantly renewable joy."[41] These, she finds, the possibility of a utopia based in a contingent and pragmatic present: one with an immediate material form that Piot describes as a "future without a telos."[42]

Senegalese women locate the materials ignored, left behind or otherwise untouched by the interests of capital in order to cultivate alternative systems of value, meaning and resource

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[39] Balibar, *ibid.*

[40] *Ibid.*

[41] Brown, *ibid.*, 128.

[42] Piot, *ibid.*, 20.

distribution. This study locates the loose, leaky, contingent, unruly, emergent and otherwise uncolonized materials that, despite their location in the bounded geography of the postcolonial state capital, contribute also to its loosening, troubling and unraveling.[43] In the contemporary neoliberal milieu, the most important colonial questions are worked out beyond the city walls of the plateau: biopolitical policies, NGO interventions, and racial discourses shoot through spaces of everyday life.[44] In the slippage between these forms of control are spaces of negotiation, transformation and possibility. In his *Nostalgia for the Future*, Charles Piot describes a contemporary African postcolonial situation in which the clear menace of the sovereign dictatorship is today replaced with a diffuse, immanent landscape of affective complexes and processes.[45] In order to make the textures of African creativity legible in the postcolonial context,

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[43] As they trouble the dedication of movement to labor; aesthetics to the colonial sublime; and voice to the business of sense, the cultural practitioners of Dakar draw from this excess to contribute to the formation of a body in sound that contends with the power of the postcolonial *potestas* in favor of the *potentia*–the force–of the always-already multitude. See Antonio Negri, *The Savage Anomaly*, Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press, 2008.

[44] As the field of cultural studies develops and adopts a vocabulary that makes a critique of colonial command and saturation possible, it also turns a new ear toward the redemptive possibilities that lie in other materials neglected by the capitalist machine: Hardt and Negri locate the potentia of the always-ready multitude. Escobar seeks the thresholds of "New Possible Worlds" in practices of radical political alterity, and Grossberg limns a "context of hope" from the virtual field of possibility: I do think it's our task to help create the conditions of possibility for reconstituting hope.

> I do think that it is the task of cultural studies to offer a better (re)description of the context it is analyzing (and that is what, ultimately, cultural studies is always analyzing; it is about contexts, conjunctures, not specific cultural forms or practices, in my opinion at least). And at least part of what makes a description better, for me, is that it does reconstruct the context as a context of hope, it does make visible the virtual inside the actual. It does open up the context to the possibilities of struggle, transformation, and, therefore, hope.

See Lawrence Grossberg. "Affect's Future: Rediscovering the Virtual in the Actual." in Gregg and Seigworth, *The Affect Theory Reader*. 2010. Durham and London: Duke University Press.

[45] Charles Piot. *Nostalgia for the Future: West Africa after the Cold War*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010, 9

researchers must engage alternative notions of "politics and political agency that do not originate from European theory."[46]

Themes of resistance offer a sounding board by which critics measure the undoing of violent, binary, colonizing modern systems or policies. Racism, capitalism and colonialism are contested by anti-racist, anti-capitalist and anti-colonialist thinkers, leaders and movements. A great deal of scholarship, fixed on the immediate goal of demonstrating agency *within* and *against* colonial systems, focuses on identifying literatures, performances and politics of resistance by otherwise oppressed populations, whose status as subjects depend on their ability to do so. Hall, Gilroy and others, concerned with the question of unruly cultural materials beyond those engaged in a direct hegemonic struggle, call for a language with which to engage the "anti-anti-essentialism" that shapes other kinds of cultural practice.[47] Rather than follow and counter the fact of imperialism, these practices precede, work beyond or otherwise trouble its inauguration. The last ten years witness cultural studies' reorientation from discourses on individual agency to studies of community practice, and the shift from a concern with capitalist modernity's totalizing tendencies to a concern with the realities of life in its incompleteness, unevenness, weakness, lapses and flaws. Other systems of living impose upon and overflow the urban infrastructures meant to support the movement of African resources into colonial hands. Here, we consider the ways in which Dakarois economies of sounding circulate a series of discourses, practices and materials that work obliquely to transform, displace, and exist despite the parasitic work of imperial capital while also positing and maintaining alternative bodies to it.

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[46] *ibid*, 16.

[47] See Paul Gilroy. *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness*. Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1993, 102.

The primal scream of Sembené's child of independence speaks to the critical question of noise, excess, and embodiment in the postcolony. The primal scream is not bound to answer another; it precedes the social stimulus and demands answer. With all of the cinematic tools available to him, Sembené chooses this most basic element of humanity: the pure ontological excess of unsignified noise that is on one hand, not beholden to the subjugation of social speech, while it is on the other, answerable: ethical, in that it presences a body in relation to other bodies, but presocial.[48] This most fundamental deployment of affect, for Sembené, marks the seam between the reality of Borom Sarret's daily life in the African postcolony and the loud problem of its futurity: the endurance of African life. The postcolonial map limns a system with actors, while the film's soundtrack makes legible bodies that surround, contest, speak for, and demand from other bodies.

In this study of the sabar, I pay special attention to how these densities are and *are not* mapped to individual bodies: where an unmistakable voice must always be presenced in the body of its personality; where the sounds of encounter; of mingled breath and laughter meet in between bodies, where it appears disjointed from a body altogether, or where is it ventriloquized from woman to a partner's drum. This is a cartography made up of sonic intensities rather than landmarks: a stratum by which individual articulations can be sounded. Each woman in the sabar space articulates herself through a series of material creative practices that structure the relationship between her own and other dynamic bodies; sound is the act of ethical intersticiality, of being together. A sabar dancer at once establishes, procures, asserts, engages and transforms the affective complex that articulates in her personhood.

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[48] Dolar suggests the political potential of a "bad" voice that ruptures logocentric structures, or keeps them in motion, co-constituting emergent structures of being. Mladen Dolar, *A Voice and Nothing More*. Cambridge & London, The MIT Press, 2006, 105-6..

As I concern my ethnographic ear with the complex of sound rather than the personal voice, a series of bodies of different scales become evident: that of the sabar itself, and then, more broadly, a neighborhood/network of sabars. If, in light of Deleuzian theories of affect and the body, the sabar is an emergent social body with a recognizable center, boundaries, and drive to self-preservation, we make legible its affect upon other social bodies, including Senegalese nationhood, global capitalism and the postcolonial sublime. The individual sounding bodies of Dakaroises women contribute to the formation of an emergent body in greater scale; that of the sounding sabar community. On the urban scale, this sabar and its neighboring sabars, spectacles, griot's interludes, Sufi chants, and Qu'aranic recitations assemble an alternative *terra*: a body in sound in which Dakar's multitude lives and thrives. As they draw from a legacy of critical aesthetic practice in Senegal, master musical practitioners cultivate the fugitive, excess and hidden materials that allow them to create alternative, life-affirming structures of sustenance: fluctuations in meaning, improvisations in sound and style, the omnipresent excesses of noise and nonsense. A contextual study of this creativity evidences the critical ways in which popular artists theorize and utilize the lapses, rough edges, disconnections, and ruptures that bend culture-as-we-understand-it out of shape to create emergent cultural formations. In the forms of new musical genres, street dance parties, and Sufi chant circles, the materials of community are assembled and posited in the midst of the postcolonial African cityscape.[49]

DAKAROIS AESTHETICS, MUSICAL IMAGINATION AND URBAN TRANSFORMATION

The Dakarois body in sound is critical cultural formation of the kind rarely engaged by ethnographers of African culture. This is an issue of access and investment on the part of

[49] Barry Shank. "The Political Agency of Musical Beauty." From: *American Quarterly* · Volume 63, Number 3, September 2011, 831-855.

researchers, and the genealogy of discourses on African society.[50] V.Y. Mudimbe's work on Africans' engagement with a self-constructed unitary essence of "Africanity" in counterpoint to the colonial-missionary-academic project suggests new registers of research for ethnographers in contemporary Africa, and contemporary Dakar is a crucible for discourses on African self-invention.[51]

Dakar, founded on the westernmost point of the Atlantic coast, manifests a special cosmopolitanism transversed historically by Berber holy men, Arab traders, Portuguese slavers, French businessmen, Soviet strategists, and Jesuit missionaries. The city, like its neighboring West African metropoli Lagos, Accra, Bamako and Abidjan, represents an emerging urban West Africa rooted doubly in a colonial history of occupation, exploitation and contestation, but also in local practices of imagination, experimentation and activity by which residents survive and thrive. The careful advancement of the idea of Senegal-as-nation by thinkers such as Senghor, Diop, Ousmane Sembené, Sokhna Arame Fall, and Cheikh Amadou Bamba, and the development of a distinctive national culture, which in turn draws from reversions and fusions of regional ethic and artisanal traditions (*adda,* which includes ethnic rites of passage and local dialects) lends relative stability to the concept of Senegal and Senegaleseness. The development of recognized national arts and cultural practices: *mbalax* music, *lamb ji* professional wrestling, the adoption of the Wolof language as a *lingua franca* across Senegalese ethnic groups, and a

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[50] Andrew H. Apter, *Beyond Words: Discourse And Critical Agency In Africa*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007., 79-80

[51] Mudimbe explores this connection vividly in his genealogy of the missionary impulse in academic representations of African culture. VY Mudimbe, The Invention of Africa: Gnosis, Philosophy, and the Order of Knowledge. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1988. See also: Apter, *ibid.*, 35.

remarkable body of national film and theatre allow us to speak about a multiethnic Senegalese nation with a boundary, an exteriority and interiority.

Infused with a careful and emergent national unity grounded in a shared Sufi theology (96% of the population identifies as such) and traditions of interethnic inclusivity fostered by Senghor and others, Senegalese national discourses play on a belonging that is both self-consciously constructed and responsive to notions of regional indigeneity.[52] Manifest in the productive tension between Diop's Pan-Africanism and Senghor's Negritude; Sembené's radical politics and the Transaharan Islamic piety, Senegal imagines itself a nation across difference. While Senegalese sociality takes into account so varied an assemblage of social systems and factors as to appear unpredictable, the notion of Senegalese culture ("*cossan")* coalesces in cohesive imagined nationhood. Across ethnic lines, the Senegalese share the use of Wolof as a lingua franca, a friendliness to the work and philosophy of Sufi Islam, a premium on the work of griots, a commitment to the aesthetics of fashion, political discourse and dialogue, the maintenance of sovereign space and occult economies, and transethnic folkways including *mbalax* pop music, the staple daily meal of rice-and-fish (*ceebu jen*), and the street dance of the *sabar*. The people of Senegal hold in common a commitment to the idea of Senegalese-ness, a cooperative project that has helped them to resist the kinds of violent interethnic strife that besets neighboring counties. The co-imagining that is Senegal is articulated continuously in the artistic output of the country, in which discourses on the ways of *cossan* (culture) for *waa Senegal* (the people of Senegal) are a lyrical staple.

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[52] This oscillation between modes of constructed Africanity draws critically from, but is not beholden to, the notions of African otherness described by Mbembe in "Self-Writing."

The sea change of Senegal's 2012 presidential election reflects a popular solidarity both evident in streetbound shouts of political protest and folded into the tenor of the talking drum; here, discourses in the public square are most often deployed in the medium of musical voice. While the young men of hip-hop youth resistance groups such as Y'en a Mare have been recognized by the international press for their political organizing, less visible revolutionary undercurrents also emerge from the work of women ritual poets, praise singers, and pop artists as they activate a legacy of regional women's sounding practices to effect social change.[53]

European architects instantiated the notion of distant, centralized power in the form of government workers' high-rises, experimental towers in the public squares, cliffside mega-hotels, massive freight ships, and an assortment of larger-than-life statues. The postcolonial infrastructure of the city echoes this aesthetic of colonial largesse. In his study of "technopolitics" in the Islamic urban regions of Nigeria, Brian Larkin describes a contemporary colonial sublime manifest in "an effort, by colonialists, to use technology as part of political rule, and as evidence of the supremacy of European technological civilization."[54] Dakar's postcolonial status is built into its very structure and rendered, in the financier's plateau, in grand, gilded

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[53] mperial sound is a primary medium in establishing and re-establishing the imaginary of the sovereign state; Adorno, Ian Baucom points out, heard it in the voices of radio announcers, whom mass audiences must passively consume.15 While Adorno's colonizing voice drowns out the dissenting force of other bodies with microphones and clarity, Fanon teaches us that the sovereign commandement can be troubled and transgressed by an unruly sound that precedes and intercepts it; the contemporary imperial voice is a singular response that attempts to drown practices of consumption, noise and conversation after the fact of noise. Baucom suggests, "Postcolonial criticism is indebted to Fanon for revealing that imperialism works in large part by policing, regulating, and interpreting the visible. It needs now to consider what Fanon has to teach us about the audible." Sounds and words navigate tricky global, national, and local systems, from the flight paths of postcolonial capital to the intimate networks of the homegrown music industry. See Ian Baucom, "Frantz Fanon's Radio: Solidarity, Diaspora, and the Tactics of Listening," *Contemporary Literature* Vol. 42, No. 1 (Spring, 2001), pp. 15-49 Published by: University of Wisconsin Press, 16.

[54] For a deeply contextualized study of the aesthetics of postcoloniality in relation to African cultural practice, see Larkin, Brian. *Signal and Noise: Media, Infrastructure, and Urban Culture in Nigeria*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2008, 39.

design: the figure of the foreign metropolis and the twin to the European city. On this grand scale, the political registers of song, poetry, and women's creativity are inaudible. Larkin finds, however, that as the novelty and reliability of colonial transportation and media infrastructures in the region began to decay, "the colonial sublime, while deeply powerful, was also surprisingly fragile, undermined by the very technological processes it rested on."[55] Here lies the slippage between the would-be totality of imperialism and the reality of African life: the generative possibility of "noise" by which Africans create a viable, independent future from the intended "signal" sounded by imperial development of the continent. As political scientists, economists and historians continue to do the critical work of mapping the structures of global capital and their mediation in popular form, contemporary cultural studies finds itself concerned with the languages by which these institutions are ruptured, displaced, and transformed. This realm of lived African evidences a world of possibility, of an African possibility that has readymade grounding in what Mbembe calls "the thickness of the African Present."[56]

The act of *commandement* relies on the affective potential of sound to reach into a subject's interior space (a vibrating eardrum, a metered pulse) and move her to appropriate action. The physical and technological structures of postcoloniality are accompanied by events of sounding, announcements, speeches, public calls to inhabit the colonized body (as Frantz Fanon marks the moment of his entry into the fact of blackness to the event of his being called a "nigger" in the town square), or to be sorted into the proper spaces under the legal words and letters of apartheid. Adriana Cavarero locates the politics of the imperial voice in any national

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[55] *ibid*.

[56] Achille Mbembe, "African Modes of Self-Writing", *Public Culture* 14(1): 239–273, Duke University Press, 2002, 271.

anthem, sung in unison, which overtakes the pleasure and *potentia* of the embodied, individual voice for the sake of centralized nationhood: a "musically relational uniqueness that speech itself, as a universal code of signification, would rather ignore, if not expel."[57] The growing emphasis on sound studies and "sounded ways of knowing" in anthropology and cultural studies acknowledges the critical nature of these "politics of aurality" as they constitute and affect global listening publics.[58]

The power of the musical word is an important medium to the power-from-below that is critical to the maintenance of life and mobility in the postcolony. Leopold Sedar Senghor, the first president of the Senegalese postcolony, moored his rhetoric in the cosmopolitan aesthetic of Négritude poetry. He cast an imagined Senegalese nationhood in the voice of his Serer people, who count among their numbers a large, fluid population of masters of eloquence. For Senghor, the voice of independence was Yande Codou Sene, a woman praise singer who articulated both the *person* of its president and its corollary, the *body* of Senegal.[59] Sene, whose family represented a long matrilineal arc of women griottes, possessed an exquisite voice, the power of which moved Senghor to seek out and court the griotte. He ultimately won her loyalty through gestures of respect and showers of riches. Sene's voice, matched to those of her Serer backing singers in a remarkable poetic polyphony, was incredibly influential as a unifying cultural force; the cost of her loyalty was legitimated by Senghor's ability to maintain power and relative peace

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[57] Adriana Cavarero. *For More Than One Voice: Toward a Philosophy of Vocal Expression*. Trans. Paul A. Kottman. Stanford: Stanford UP, 2005, 200-201.

[58] David Samuels, L. Meintjes, A Ochoa, T Porcello. "Soundscapes: Toward a Sounded Anthropology." *Annual Review of Anthropology* 39.329-345 (2010), 339.

[59] Matthew Lavoie, "Yandé Codou Sène, R.I.P." on African Music Treasures website. August 4th, 2010 url: http://blogs.voanews.com/african-music-treasures/2010/08/04/yande-codou-sene-r-i-p/

throughout his 20-year presidency.[60] As one of countless crossover stars from the ritual to the popular realm, Sene famously performed a pop hit ("Lees Waxul"—literally, "that which cannot be said") with another griotte's son, Senegalese pop star Youssou N'Dour.[61] In her song, *Leopolo*, Sene locates the true power behind the respected leader of Senegalese independence:

> Leopold, Leo, Yaay Ñilane
> Leo, Yaay Ñilane baaxoo liggeyu ndiaye doom,
> Leo, ndama Yaay Ñilane.
>
> *Leopold, Leo, Mother Ñilane:*
> *Leo, Mother Ñilane, your goodness is from the work of the mother,*
> *Leo, the little one of Mother Ñilane.*[62]

In his dedicated patronage of the woman praise-singer, Senghor engages an extra-European concept of politics–one responsive to the specific conditions of the Senegalese postcolony–of the kind Piot calls for in contemporary work on Africa. The president of Senegalese independence, whose verse at the top of this chapter evidences his own interest in the powers of voice and movement to establish African independence, institutionalized a new state patronage of Senegalese griots that had eroded under colonial displacement and social upheaval. In the bardic voice of Yandé Codou, Senghor located a powerful medium by which he established and maintained his own charisma as a leader amongst the people of Senegal.

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[60] For a fascinating look into Codou's community practices, see: Laurence Gavron, " YANDE CODOU : Sur les traces de la diva du Sine." Self-released documentary film, 2008.

[61] 61 Du lepp lu ñu la waax; It isn't all they tell you,
Walla lepp lu ñu la wone, Or all they show you.
Ci lu mel nii cinema, For example, the cinema;
Nga dal di koy gemm You believe in it.
Del gestu lu weesu degg You should research beyond what you hear.
Nee naa leeswoo, I say: things that(…)
Nee naa lees waxul. I say: things that cannot be said
Youssou N'Dour and Yandé Codou Sene, "Lees Waaxul": Author's translation.

[62] Yande Codou Sene, "Leopold." Recording provennce unknown; available online at url http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Acl1HU_I-bQ

The accessibility of many of the literatures that ground Senegalese women's creativity enriches this field of study: Senghor's Negritude, Diop's anthropology, Ba's feminist literature, Senegalese Sufism's holy archives, African Hip-Hop's contemporary discourses of transnational blackness. Add to these the multiplex discourses that constitute Senegalese musical aesthetics as articulated in the artistic tenor of the big city: a communal ethics of even material distribution, discourses on property rights, poetic themes and improvisations, the talking drum's rhythmic texts. The contexts of the booming West African cityscape lend further character to the ethnographic materials at hand: multiethnic living in a system of distinct neighborhoods; myriad interactions with Asia, the North Atlantic, and the Arab Worlds; the local and imported resources necessary to support a wide variety of performance modes and audiences. Further, the legacy of critical work by Senegalese women, documented less in book-length literatures (with some notable exceptions), than in a vast archive of aesthetic, poetic, sartorial, pedagogical and gastronomic texts, all animated by legacy of women's musical creativity.[63] This study amplifies five powerful voices: mothers and sisters: two praise singers, a rapper, a pop star and a world music chanteuse.

Like the dance that calls young Senegalese women into community embodiment, a pedagogical imperative underlines the layout of this dissertation. Through the work of pop star Njaaya, we encounter the representations of Africa and African creativity conjured by modernist

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[63] See Moira Gatens: " It is in Spinoza's theory of the affects (or emotions) that Armstrong locates the true worth of his philosophy for the feminist project of reconceiving autonomy along relational lines. On his account the relative complexity of the human body gives rise to the capacity of the individual to both affect and be affected in a multiplicity of ways. The "receptivity" of human beings to a range of encounters should not be viewed, Armstrong insists, as "the mark of passivity in the face of external forces of nature, but is itself a power, and a power which increases our power of acting." Although Spinoza's conception of the individual is both dynamic and permeable it is nonetheless a fully-fledged self or individual. Moira Gatens, ed. Feminist Interpretations of Benedict Spinoza. University Park, PA: The Pennsylvania State University. Press 2009,14.

discourses of exoticism, Africanity and the "other." Praise singer Soukeye Dieng and the women and men of her praise-singing family articulate a series of core aesthetics that mediate ethnic traditions (*adda*) with the national valence of Senegalese *cossan*, or unique national culture. At the intersection of these two shaping forces on Senegalese creativity, chapter three examines, through the work of rappeuse Sister Toussa and her women's freestyle group, GOTAL, processes of personalization and strategic articulation by which critical vocal projects are launched. As we mine the influence of West African Sufi literatures and local *gnoses*, or ways of knowing the world, on the work of these artists, we examine the work of woman praise singers Binta Sarr Diop and her idol, Sokhna Khady Ba. In their work, we plumb the ontological relationship between radical spiritual interiority that make vocal sounding possible, and the relationship of this aesthetics of alterity to communion with Allah. Finally, we visit the work of pop sensation Oumou Sow and her fusion genre *rap-mbalax*, through which a powerful liberatory program animates the textures of her pneumatic dance-pop hits.

As the resistant forces of anti-capitalism, anti-imperialism and self-governance work to allay the effects of these systems on the lives of African people, sounds and words work upon and through the material relations that give these systems shape. William James suggests that radical empiricism emphasizes

> experience [that] includes 'transitive' as well as 'substantive' elements, conjunctions as well as disjunctions, and [encourages] us to recover a lost sense of the immediate, activist, ambiguous 'plenum of existence' in which all ideas and intellectual constructions are grounded.[64]

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[64] As cited in Michael Jackson, *Paths Toward a Clearing : Radical Empiricism and Ethnographical Inquiry*, Bloomington : Indiana University Press, c1989., 3.

I here consider a re-placed empiricism in which I attend to interior spaces, living rooms, Sufi worship gatherings, hip-hop cyphers and women's chant circles from which new poetries are always emerging.[65]

This study bears witness to the ways in which Senegalese women conceptualize and engage their power to imagine, create and transform differentially; it illustrates the strategies women musical artists use to implement self-authored programs by which they and their communities can survive and thrive; it maps the ways in which these different programs intersect, intertwine, and collect to substantiate new cultural formations that generate the resources necessary to sustain themselves and their practitioners and promise a viable future. The critical inheritances that ground the political imaginations of African women are rarely engaged by ethnographers or fans of African music. I argue that African perspectives, practices and philosophies, as evidenced by a close, collaborative and contextual study of the work of these women, represents a critical body of literature by which we can better understand the emergence of new worlds and the multiplicity of ways in which these worlds are inhabited. I show that Senegalese women recognize, celebrate and nourish this creative body through a critical artistic pedagogy and a series of literatures surrounding aesthetic practice. This practice is a co-creation of the women involved, and it works for them: it matters, and it matters enough that it has become an omnipresent source of social exchange and creativity for the women of Dakar. This

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[65] As the fields of Communication Studies, Anthropology, and Cultural Studies turn to poststructuralism to consider the work of affect beyond hegemony and resistance, theorists ask ontological questions about the political materiality of cultural practices, inspired by Hardt and Negri, Deleuze, Levinas and Spinoza. To consider the radical fact of African life amidst the exhausting postcolonial circumstances of poverty, famine, and political strife, the study of emergent global systems must begin to weigh the force of an African livelihood that, on the sovereign scale, simply doesn't matter: the possibilities of Deleuzian becoming that lay in the subtler textures of social materiality. "History amounts only to a set of preconditions, however recent, that one leaves behind in order to 'become,' that is, to create something new" Gilles Deleuze, *Negotiations: 1972-1990* (European Perspectives). Published by Columbia University Press 1995-11,1995., 171.

research rests on the recognition of the weight of this practice, and the ability of its associated bodies to both maintain themselves and exert affect upon neighboring bodies.

As it manifests a feminine cosmopolitanism, the practice of sabar is an index to the complexity of cultural studies in contemporary West Africa. As an emergent interethnic practice, its many folds and movements intersect with the question of how sound articulates ethical relationships between practitioners and the broader tectonics of modernity. In this dissertation, I examine the work of five young women artists, each of whom works in a contemporary urban Dakar in which sabar is an omnipresent force. Sabar compels us to ask what other practices are at work while hidden from the observing eye. We begin thinking spatially and thinking materially about culture, and about the temporality the ritual represents. The ways in which we frame our studies become very important. Is this a ritual, a game, a sublimated animistic tradition, a block party? Is it a community meeting, a hustle for the artists involved, a public relations event, or a popular spectacle? Is it a mess, a tangle, a roadblock made of the excess movements of bodies recreating instead of working, a simulation of happiness in a failed economy, a fiction? Why are these women dancing? The dedication of dear personal and community resources to these excesses betray a logic beyond the casual observer's reach. Most studies of the sabar are concerned much more with the politics of drumming the sabar than in dancing it; others suggest that these women's dance is a reaction to the constraints of Islam on displaying and moving the feminine body.[66] While the former, it can be argued, overlooks women's authorship in this sonic

[66] The work of Dutch dancer and anthropologist Sophie Schowenwaar, whose documentaries on sabar have been popular with youtube viewers, functions on this thesis. For contextual work on sabar with a special focus on drumming and its related oral traditions, see Patricia Tang, *Masters of the Sabar: Wolof Griot Percussionists of Senegal.* Temple University Press, 2007.

event, the latter actively subverts the possibility of women's creativity for a form of pathological reactivity. From the center of the sabar circle emanates an affective complex.

Embodied ethnographic work on music, to evoke Ellison's figure of the blues, fingers the jagged grain in which aesthetics, bodies, memory and the political coalesce; here, we discover the substance of culture. While we can't always put our finger on it, we can, through close attention to our sensory experience of *being in* culture, discern its affect upon the other bodies with which it interacts. We sense what matters: activity in a region that is so often represented as passive as cultural studies opens up to other texts, other bodies, and allows itself to be transformed in the process. I model this work, in part, on Louise Meintjes' foundational work with *mbaqanga* artists in *Sound of Africa*, which highlights the strategic performances, deep significations and sensory reverberations generated by the engagement of African artists with the world of popular music and conjunctural political discourses: the *Sound of Africa* is a material shift that happens in the less immediately sensory registers of the music rather than simply in its surface texts. Within this sonic nexus, Senegal's *Generation Fly to Fly* is a frontier for young, urban women who locate the materials of mobility not in launching from monuments, but from the possibilities of street dances organized in their shadows.

CHAPTER 1: SOKHNA KHADY: SENEGALESE SUFI WOMEN'S MUSICAL PRACTICE, FEMININE INTERIOR WORLDS, AND POSSIBILITIES FOR ETHNOGRAPHIC LISTENING

Dakar is thriving. From the threshold of my Medina apartment, I can hear the life of the city as it resonates from its high mud-brick walls, rises from its streets, and issues from its loudspeakers. The five daily Islamic calls to prayer–each issued by hundreds of local *muzzeins* during the holy hours–are confluent with the robust sounds of community life in the open air market. This city spills over with voices. Every interaction in Senegambian culture, thickened still in the crowded urban context, calls for a special communicative dance: a family greeting, a negotiation, a formality, a witty comment, a laugh, a praise, a blessing. The phonographic business of being in Dakar is entangled further in the music and song that, in this city of sound, overlaps polyrhythmically with itself in every last corner. As I live and work in its midst, I distinguish one special voice amongst the others: a woman's voice rounded into a fearless Wolof tenor. It carries the regional Sufi devotional praise song, an insistent call-and-response, passionate improvisatory loops and whorls. I invite it into my dwelling. Singing along, memorizing its flourishes, setting my daily business to its rhythms over my years in Dakar, I am attuned.

As it carries her devotion to Allah, the voice of praise singer Sokhna Khady Ba stretches into long sonic strands of Sufi devotional prayer, emanates from the car stereos of the faithful,

and extends into the homes of all within earshot of the city's ad-hoc Sufi soundsystems.[67] Members of neighborhood dahrias–worship groups whose weekly streetside meetings are dedicated to spiritual learning and ritual voicing–test the sound of their rented speakers with Sokhna Khady's CD before they set in with their own late-night chants, patterned on her unmistakable style. In the city's dense artisanal neighborhoods, Sokhna Khady's voice is integrated into the phonographic fabric from which the life of the city is composed even as it retains its distinct character. Long before I am able to witness Sokhna Khady perform her renowned late-night ritual chants, her voice accompanies my fieldwork: I hear its tones and timbres as it moves amidst the cityscape, contributing to Dakar's musical life.

This is an anthropology of sound: a phonographic engagement with a culture and the people who belong in it. In this world, Sokhna Khady's faith animates the cultural body of Dakar through the medium of voice. By "cultural body," I indicate the life of the people of city as distinct from the dominant physical and social infrastructures of the postcolonial metropolis. My broader research shows how Senegalese musical culture provides a site for the ritual redistribution of wealth, the generation of resources through creative goods and texts, and a platform for signified political discourse. Most importantly, it is essential to an alternative social ecosystem by which the Senegalese struggle to live beyond the circumstances of postcolonial poverty and underdevelopment. Although the political materiality of women's Sufi poetry, ritual song, bardic praise, and dance pop is less readily observable in its immediate spaces of

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[67] In Senegal, the name Sokhna (loosely, "Sister") is both a common title used to indicate an honorable, adult, or educated woman and a common given name (see the Wolof use of the appellation "Papa" as a common male first name). Sokhna Khady Ba's given name is "Khady Bayo"–Like many others, her Pulaar ethnic surname is commonly transposed by Wolof speakers. Most Senegambians carry numerous versions and orthographies of their own names that variously recall different saintly and relative namesakes, genealogies and ethnic markers.

performance than in, for instance, a political rally staged by an activist hip-hop group, its currency is very real for the people of Senegal, who foster its longstanding cultural importance with resources. An ethnography of this feminine vocal power calls for a sensitive, collaborative methodology as it here traces the material movement of sound from Sokhna Khady's private life into the public arena, where it affects the social life of Dakar and the other political entities that overlap with it.[68]

In turn, my fieldsite is multiple: the interiors of home, eardrum, heart, and the layered public sounds of the city. These decenter the immediacy of the site of performance, with its discernible audience and performer, sequence of events, and spectacular elements. Although the effects of such a performance tend to be more measurable than, say, those of a vocal technique or an inspired verse, I am interested in showing how a *culture* of women's voicing contributes to an alternative sovereignty for the people of Senegal. I am therefore concerned with the notion of the body on two scales: the individual body of the singer herself as it produces the voice (and those of the individuals who are confluent with her performance), and the transindividual body in sound that is the cultural life of Dakar.[69] The voice of the singer itself is imbricated in the former, as a medium for the self as defined by Marshall McLuhan "....any technology whatever that

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[68] Faudree and others including Ochoa and Meintjes, drawing from the work of Feld and others, have contributed greatly to methodologies for the Anthropology of sound. According to Faudree:
Thus finding ways to integrate texts with sound into a unified analytical framework alongside the ongoing effort to decenter their primacy has implications for reflexive scholarship, forcing attention to our own expressive practices as bound up in the same processes enveloping the entities we study. Finally, paying holistic attention to texts involves examining not only their internal qualities and their embeddedness in social practice, but also their materiality as physical objects circulating in social worlds and phenomenally accessible to the senses. See Paja Faudree, 2012. "Music, Language, and Texts: Sound and Semiotic Ethnography." In *Anthropology Review* 13:53. , 521.

[69] See both Balibar's (2008) and Negri's (2000) work–drawn from Spinozist ontology– on bodies, power and politics. Balibar, Étienne and Walter Montag. 2008. Spinoza and Politics. New York: Verso Press. Negri, Antonio 2000. *The Savage Anomaly: The Power of Spinoza's Metaphysics and Politics.* Ann Arbor: University of Minnesota Press.

creates extensions of the human body and senses, from clothing to the computer."[70] In voicing her praise song, Sokhna Khady extends the force of her personal faith (and, in sound and spirit, her self) to the public realm, where it becomes confluent with the sound of the city. My two years of research with women vocalists in Dakar concerns the ways in which the Senegalese culture of voicing acts as a critical resource by which the Senegalese live robustly even as they must negotiate the gripping circumstances of postcolonial economic exhaustion.

This essay is attuned to the first step in this process of cultural perpetuation: the materialization of Sokhna Khady's faith through voice. I begin by describing how I traced the route of Sokhna Khady's voice from where I first encountered it–in its radiating, citywide, networks of sound–back through its sites of production and performance, and into its space of generation: the home in which Sokhna Khady's family and spiritual life take root. Through an ethnographic process of collaboration, conversation and coming into domestic belonging, I outline the shape of feminine vocal sociality: a medium by which Senegalese women cultivate community resources and power through the extension of their rich interior worlds. Finally, I open a space for Sokhna Khady's own theorization, rooted both in Islamic theology and Wolof etymology, of the relationship between the personal spirit and the material world.

Sokhna Khady is a *zikrkat*: a praise singer whose work is to voice the devotions of her Sufi order. Through a series of praises directly to Allah; poems to figures in Islam and to families of Sufi holy men and women; and improvised riffs and common choruses concerning the best life and conduct of a Sufi devotee, Sokhna Khady sounds the connectivity of West African Islam as she wraps all within earshot its global textures. In the space of the Baay Fall *dahira*, usually

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[70] Eric McLuhan and Frank Zingrone. 1995. *Essential McLuhan*. Concord: Anasi., 239.

held once a week by each of hundreds of such groups in Dakar, the zikrkat stands in the center of a single or series of concentric circles of faithful, who spend the night churning in ecstatic movement.[71] Buoyed by a hardworking team of drummers and echoed by an excited group of young chanters-in-training, hers is one of the extraordinary women's voices that emanates from Dakar's holy loudspeakers.[72] From the cassette players of local taxidrivers, transistors of boutique owners, and cell phones of women cooking breakfast omelets, Sokhna Khady connects the places and people of Dakar in sacred resonance. The sound and extension of her voice render a special devotional map of the city and its holy points beyond.

In recent years, Sokhna Khady's voice has become omnipresent in Senegalese public space as she establishes her artistic *personalité* amongst the creative infrastructure of Dakar.[73] In its strains are woven the distinct materials of clear Qur'anic enunciation, the Senegalese pop artist's pithy cadence, and the open tones of the *muzzein*'s call to prayer. In Senegal, where the strain of vocal tear is considered the beauty mark of artistic maturity, Sokhna Khady mines the wizened technique of the elder *griottes*–the region's hereditary masters-of-eloquence who are her provenance–to sound the unspeakable emotion invested in a particularly poignant verse. The fabric of her work integrates the inspired vocal improvisations of the Sufi praise circle with a dedicated return to verse and chorus, a mode of engaging audiences she learned, in part, from her

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[71] These ritual circles are called, in Wolof, *kurel*, and the specialized movements, *dukat*.

[72] The Baay Fall, one of a number of Sufi affiliations available to Senegalese faithful, are distinct amongst Senegalese Sufi groups for their use of the drum and bodily movement in all-night ceremonies and, in their practices of improvisatory group voicing, offer a special opportunity for women faithful to sing religious rites.

[73] The notion of the personalité is an important one in Senegalese culture derived from the French term, it suggests the kind of social gravitas traditionally reserved for nobility in the region, but that, in contemporary Dakar, becomes available to an individual who inspires admiration through her works and her teranga, or generosity/hospitality.

older sister Mada Ba, a famous pop vocalist with Senegal's Afro-Cuban Superdiamano (and now, her own group). While the ritual griotte's dramatic excess marks her improvisatory riffs, Sokhna Khady exudes the smooth confidence of a pop chanteuse as she lays down the chorus of a prayerful song. Women Sufi singers, while rarely featured in Dakar's public rituals, tend to gain special followings according to their masterful techniques and, in turn, are numbered among the region's most respected practitioners.

I first put a name to Sokhna Khady's voice in the open air of Medina's Marse Tillen, where a friendly peddler would sell me any recordings of women Sufi praise singers he could find: Sokhna Dieynaba Lam, the forceful blind reciter of the mystical Xassayid praise poetry; Aida Faye of the inland Baay Niass order; group recitations of devotional poetry by woman scholar Sokhna Maï Mbacké. For sixty cents, he handed me a bootleg CD, wrote something on the sleeve in Arabic script, and then wrote a name–not quite the right one–in roman orthography: Sokhna Khady Ndiaye.[74] He didn't know much about her, only that homemade copies of her album were making their way throughout the religious community of Baay Fall Mourides: devotees of early 20th-Century Senegalese Sufi Saint Cheikh Amadou Bamba Mbacké and adherents to the philosophy embodied his best friend, Cheikh Ibrahima "Baay" Fall. Dressed in patchwork robes and dreadlocks, the Baay Fall (women call themselves Yaay Fall) work relentlessly, like their patron, for the communal good on collective farms and alms collection, often without pay. The measured, meditative tones of Mbacké's poetry fill the Dakar soundscape, chanted by devotees from mimeographed books of hybrid Wolof-Arabic script. In antiphony, the Baay Fall sub-order of Mourides incorporate the sublime intricacies of Qur'anic gnostic voicing

[74] For more on West African and South African bootleg recording economies, see Larkin, *ibid.*

with the driving rhythms of the agrarian work song; ancient Arabic prayer with fiery contemporary improvisations, punctuated by the contrapuntal movements of swirling Baay Fall bodies. These are led by men and women alike, always from a combination of memorized verse and improvisation as they envelop entire neighborhoods in their sound.

When I played Sokhna Khady's CD in my Medina apartment, my little laptop speakers sounded a voice with which I was already familiar; I recognized Sokhna Khady Ba's confident flourishes immediately. Sokhna Khady's CD contained 8-minute studio versions of these praise songs, each with a different theme, and each imbued with an implied ecstatic movement that inspired visiting friends to dance on my balcony as if they were in dahira. A Baay Fall neighbor corrected her name. I began to ask around for her number in Dakar, sure that someone in this tight community would have her information. Although many claimed to have been moved by her voice while participating in the city's Sufi dahiras, none could tell me where her home was located. I began to hear her voice broadcast across the neighborhoods of Medina, Fass and Guediawaye, sometimes in the form of a recognizable recording from my CD. Once or twice, I thought I heard Sokhna Khady herself behind a microphone too distant to locate in the Dakar night, cast dark and dangerous with frequent power outages. I sought her out.

Finally, while visiting a woman Baay Fall healer in the Dakar suburb of Medina Gounass, I encountered a young woman who told me she was an active member of Sokhna Khady's dahira. She agreed to personally take me to Sokhna Khady's home at that instant, a fresh apartment on the serene northern Dakar beach that functions as an urban outpost for devotees of

Sufi marabout Serigne Aziz Fall.[75] I reached the threshold of Sokhna Khady's salon unaware of the substantial powers that intersected within, and their importance to my research. In an overlapping series of visits, insights and interactions that were to come, this space would become a center of ethnographic belonging; a place of insight. Even as I caught my researcher's eye on the spectacular folds of the spectacular streetside Sufi chants, her plan for our work together would involve moving inside, to the calm interior of her home. While I never witnessed Sokhna Khady chanting within, her living space assembles an expansive archive of everyday interactions, collaborations, and exchanges that are critical to the power and character of her voice. In our relocation from the street to the hearth, she reciprocated our exchange: months before, she had made her presence in my home over the sound waves of the city. That night, a chain of faithful, connected by her voice, led me into hers. In my visits to this home over months to come, Sokhna Khady would entwine me in the fabric of her domestic life, just as the smell of her household incense saturated the pages of my field notebook. In these interiors, I located a different kind of music: the hum of a life cycle in the present tense.

ON ETHNOGRAPHY AND SOUND

Ethnographic research on music most often unfolds in public spaces, where the invisible networks of sound become legible in the spectacle of event, the plot of performative action, and

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[75] Serigne Abdu Aziz Fall (also here called "Serigne Aziz Fall" and "Serigne Aziz") is the grandson of the founder of the Baay Fall practice within the Mouride Sufi order, Cheikh Ibrahima Fall (also here called, "Baay Fall," "Lamp Fall," "Mame Cheikh" and "Cheikh Ibra Fall"). Sokhna Khady's neighborhood is a new development close to the beaches of Guediawaye, nicknamed "Golf" for its ad-hoc use as a dusty golf course under the Senghor regime. Hazed with fine sand whipped by the high Atlantic winds between the overcrowded neighborhoods of Parcelles and Guediwaye, Sokhna Khady's neighborhood is situated on a quiet patch outside the busy fisherman's ports of Grand Yoff. As it becomes slowly developed into middle-class apartment buildings cast in the white walls of North African cement architecture, it collects residents who wish to live in more private spaces some distance from the bustling markets. Sokhna Khady moved here a year before my 2011 visit after eight intensive years of study with Qu'ranic scholars and devotional poets down the Senegalese coast.

the evidence of audience reaction. Here, researchers "write culture" in the mode of the event, activating the tools of thick description and observation to sound its significance. When it comes to critical work of musical voicing, however, the public musical event is only one point of articulation on a much longer creative path that extends, through the medium of sound, from the personal realm to the global political arena. I am interested in this process of cultural creativity, which Kathleen Stewart calls "cultural poesis–the creativity or generativity of things cultural."[76] Dakaroises women contribute their voices to a collective cultural formation that matters: an emergent system by which the people of Senegal found a collective future. Drawing from a legacy of indigenous knowledge of sound, voice and sociality, they contribute to Dakar's sonic life.[77] As my ethnographic work with Sokhna Khady unfolds, I locate a collaborative methodology by which this critical strain of musical creativity can be made legible. I outline this process of amplification and reverberation at the close of this article.

The extra-textual politics of musicmaking emerge in the interstices between the signification of speech (spoken or instrumentally mimicked) with the sensory materiality of sound. Musicians skilled and schooled in the politics of representation often foreground the conversations between the aesthetic, political, theoretical and spiritual realms that escape immediate observation. John Coltrane describes this potential for radical intervention in terms of cognitive affect:

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[76] Stewart, Kathleen. 2005. "Cultural Poesis: The Generativity of Emergent Things." *In Handbook of Qualitative Research, 3rd Edition*, ed. Norman Denzin and Yvonna Lincoln, 1027-1042. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 1027.

[77] Relevant knowledge systems include Wolof proverbs, a ritual emphasis on voicing, the teaching and traditions of Sufi Islam, and the everpresent institution of the griot or jeli figure in Senegalese society.

> "….we must make an effort to try and make it better. So it's the same socially, musically, politically, and in any department of our lives…I think music is an instrument. It can create the initial thought patterns that can change the thinking of people."[78]

This notion of music as an instrumental medium of social change is in part a consequence of its thick and uncontainable sensuality, which reaches into the human ear to beat the cochlear drum where it paces the heart and stride and, for Coltrane, the movements of thought.[79]

The Senegalese, drawing from deep traditions of artistic patronage, devote vast resources to a culture of sounding evident in the thick soundscape of Dakar and the livelihoods of its many musical artists. To understand the role of Sokhna Khady's performance in building a robust public life for Dakaroise women despite the postcolonial contexts of poverty, displacement, and disempowerment, I attend to materials that precede the event of musical sounding: those that compose the personal home-world. For all the spectacle that ethnographic research on music entails, the question of voicing–and the performances that give it shape–calls instead for special insight into the interior spaces from which the voice emanates. The processes by which the musical self matters become evident through close attention to a sequence of interaction that extends from the practitioners themselves, through the amplifier of performance, and into the public realm, where they cross and tangle the sympathetic threads of other musical voices. My ethnographic project with women vocalists in Senegal addresses the question of how the feminine voice, when deployed, contributes to the empowerment of a generation of young women in Senegal; it also engages the ways in which the shape and style of voice are made to

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[78] Frank Kofsky, 1970. *Black Radicalism and the Revolution in Music.* Atlanta: Pathfinder Press, 227.

[79] See also Lefebvre, Henri. *Rhythmanalysis: Space, Time and Everyday LIfe.* New York: Continuum, 2004.

articulate a life that according to Mbembe, in the stifling socioeconomic circumstances of the African postcolony, "is necessarily contradictory and paradoxical" by its very existence.[80]

To trace the routes by which a multitude of human lives animate Dakar's body in sound, I activate particular understandings of voice and affect: the medium and substance of this critical resource. The voice is a primary medium by which individual Senegalese women organize their active relationship with others. For Adriana Cavarero, "...nothing communicates uniqueness more than the voice. This not only happens in speech,...but above all in the relational resonance that the musicality of every (living) language preserves."[81] Voice is a vehicle by which an individual, in her irreducible singularity, sings herself into a structured relationship to the broader multitude. This is made possible through the circulation of affect, defined in its broadest and most useful sense in the work of Massumi: a transpersonal state in which a body empowers or reduces the ability of another (or others) to act.[82] The voice exerts a special and intimate material force on the eardrums and heartbeats of others and secondarily activates emotions, thought processes, movements, and relationships by which a sounding community structures itself. It enables possibilities for African women in an otherwise stolid postcolonial landscape.

The voice, in its public extension, articulates a personal space Adrian Piper calls "...interiority; of a vivid and extended life of the mind that includes imagination, intellection, and

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[80] Achille Mbembe, "Variations on the Beautiful in Congolese Worlds of Sound." In *Beautiful/Ugly,* ed. Sarah Nuttall, Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2006, 63.

[81] Adriana Cavarero, *For More than one Voice: Toward a Philosophy of Vocal Expression*, Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press. 2005, 197-98.

[82] Brian Massumi. "Notes on the Translation and Acknowledgements." In Deleuze, G. and Guattari, F. *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, Minneapolis: U of Minnesota, 1987l, xvi.

reflection; these are the foundations of transpersonal rationality."[83] Piper tells us that the seam between the contained moral world of interiority and the shared realm of social reality is marked by a process of explosiveness and control by which an individual empowers herself in resonance with others.[84] A powerful voice is one that exerts a substantial force upon its hearers as they attune themselves to it; in Sokhna Khady's case, it move circles of people into ecstatic worship, generates income at the bootleg CD market, and fosters a network of communal resources through a region deeply affected by poverty. An ethnography of such a voice traces the contours of this "explosiveness and control" at its source: the life of the individual who generates this affect.

Like the voice that reaches from the windpipe and sinuses of the singer to the eardrums and heartbeats of her listeners, ethnographic processes flow from and strive toward resonant interior spaces. The embodied researcher draws from her own modes of thinking and understanding to involve the personal worlds of others in a process of polyvocalization: a representational chorus or–in some cases–cacophony.[85] Collaborative ethnography, key to this polyvocality, is contoured by the voices of multiple interlocutors, who perform a methodology that, in Lassiter's germinal definition, "...deliberately and explicitly emphasizes collaboration at every point in the process, without veiling it–from project conceptualization, to fieldwork, and

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[83] Adrian Piper, *Rationality and the Structure of the Self, Volume 2: A Kantian Conception,* Berlin: Research Archive Foundation Berlin, 2008.

[84] "An agent who embodies this ideal suppresses immediate and untrammeled expression of thought or desire; withholds them from external view, drives them inward, transforms them into enduring mental and emotional presences, and forces an inward expansion in the purview of the mind's eye in order to accommodate them. The more fully such an agent internalizes thought and desire, the more intensely and vividly she experiences them and the greater her capacity for interiority becomes. Scope and depth of interiority is thus directly proportional to suppression and control of the impulse to immediately vent thoughts and desires in action." Piper, *ibid*,, 200.

[85] Clifford, *ibid*., 118-146.

especially, through the writing process."[86] This new model of collaboration replaces what Marcus and Holmes describe as the "classic scene" of the fieldwork encounter: the Malinowskian conference between foreign researcher and native subject over the "camp table" now becomes, in the context of contemporary representational complexity, a collection of scenes involving multiple, mobile liaisons, subjects and interlocutors.[87] Ethnography today incorporates the presence of multiple actors writing, voicing, and culture in tandem, in sites ranging from the soundscape of the everyday to home space of the vocal natality.

For her film *Reassemblage*, Trinh Minh-ha bases her positionality "speaking next to" the women of the Senegalese countryside. She uses repeated and intimate shots of the grounded domestic hearth–and the sounds of cooing mothers and gossiping women that accompany this visual intimacy–to counter the ethnographic longview that many studies of African society, concerned with systems of kinship and exchange, entail.[88] Trinh is an ethnographer with the project of representing the Senegalese culture for the education, consumption, and gaze of largely non-African audiences. At the same time, she finds herself drawn so far into the domestic hearth as to subvert this sense of representational purpose. Instead, she enters a space of mutual, creative resonance with the women she works with. She works in tension between the visual ethnographic representation of an Other culture and the embodied experiences of sounding and witnessing that interrupt this project.

> At the beginning, you hear the music of the people you see, but at the end of the film, when I'm in the northern part of Senegal, you hear it again because it has become the

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[86] Luke Eric Lassiter, *The Chicago Guide to Collaborative Ethnography,* Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005, 118-146.

[87] Douglas R. Holmes, and George E. Marcus. "Collaboration today and the re-imagination of the classic scene of fieldwork encounter." Collaborative Anthropologies 1, no. 1 (2008): 81-101, 86.

[88] Trinh, 1982.

> music that I hear when I work on the images. The music enters me sometimes...So there is one part of the film created by putting things from the same region together, and there is another part which is me, how I hear a voice repeatedly, how it haunts me.[89]

Trinh evokes the notion of haunting as the aural interruption of the ethnographic object as it transgresses, troubles, and shapes the documentary project. While this kind of co-voicing does not necessarily reflect the "deliberate" and "explicit" processes of ethnographic collaboration outlined by Lassiter, it does replace the conventional relationship between researcher and researched to empower critical new modes of representation. As a Vietnamese immigrant to the US who has herself experienced the politics of Third World struggle; as a former subject of the Francophone empire; as a musical practitioner; and as a woman, Trinh recognizes, values, and invites the haunting force of sound into the heart of her project. We might also imagine that this haunting force, if not welcomed by the ethnographer, might have situated itself amidst the ethnographic text despite, and wonder how these seeping and unruly sounds might often accompany ethnographic texts. Without an explicit process of collaboration, and far from Malinowski's camp table, Trinh has nonetheless opened her representation to the kinds of co-operation, reflexivity, and vulnerability that are critical to collaborative ethnographic work.

As it troubles the center/periphery diagram of staged musicmaking, collaborative ethnography based in the home space churns to legibility an alternative set of cultural materials. These outline the generative powers of musical creativity: a record of less-legible fragments, interactions, and impressions that connect the personal imagination with a broader cultural formation. At home, as the sound of a singer's voice stirs the ethnographer's eardrum and heartbeat; as the food and the smells of the kitchen work upon her senses; and as the singular

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[89] Hulser *ibid.*, 17-18.

ethos of the family salon guide her co-movements throughout the day, the textures of fieldwork resonate with the disposition of the home itself. Ethnographic engagement with the personal worlds of musical practitioners, and by extension, the private ecosystem of their homes, temporarily relieves research from the immediate task of thick sequential event description and frees it to other projects: attention to impressions, subtleties, and conversations. In order to sustain this process of "imagination, intellection, and reflection," to recall Piper's description of interiority, the researcher must attune herself to the domestic, spiritual, and feminine spaces in which she works.

Even as I pursued an ethnographic relationship in the course of my fieldwork, I would have been unable to "insinuate" myself–to use Marcus' and Holmes' term–for that express purpose.[90] Instead, I was adopted into the home of Sokhna Khady and, in turn, became an extension of my would-be-subject's personal design. The power structure of researcher and researched, so clear over the classic anthropological camp table, fell away in the context of Sokhna Khady's house rules. As Sokhna Khady invited me into her home, she initiated a mode of co-affectivity in which each of us fostered hew own resonant project. Ensconced in her home, we worked less as researcher and subject than as partners in the context of a Senegalese worldview that emphasizes overlapping fields of inclusivity: ethnicity, family name, Sufi order, region of origin, city neighborhood, social class, life stage. These recall Delanda's notion of assemblage, from the work of Deleuze and grounded in Spinozist thinking on the body and affect. Assemblage theory addresses bodies that are

[90] Holmes and Marcus, *ibid.*, 86.

> "...made up of parts that are self-subsistent and articulated by relations of exteriority, so that a part may be detached and made a component of another assemblage....[as well as] processes which stabilize or destabilize the identity of the assemblage."[91]

To these Deleuzian characteristics of a cultural body and its processes, Delanda adds the materiality of communication:

> "...an extra axis defining processes in which specialized expressive media intervene in processes which consolidate and rigidify the identity of the assemblage..."[92]

Rather than focus on the individual relationships between a singer and ritual attendees, I am concerned with the work of Sohna Khady's voice as it consolidates an alternative body of Senegaleseness We assemble in Sokhna Khady's home to form what the Senegalese call, in Wolof, a *waa kër*: "people of the house." We are a family compound bound by voice and prayer. While I frequently discussed my ethnographic project and perspectives with Sokhna Khady and her family, she shaped my role as a witness to her own work, an intellectual sparring partner, a student, and a representative of her home to visitors (or entourage at ritual time). My ethnographic presence became an extension of her musical creativity, and of the ethos behind her work.

To the end of understanding the hidden generative powers of the domestic, everyday, or personal, Kathleen Stewart suggests an ethnography that "...takes us to the surge of intensity itself": the microclimate of the individual, who affects and is affected by bodies social.[93] Stewart attends to the critical importance of the everyday; the domestic, to ethnographic work. Her methodology "...tries to follow lines of force as they emerge in moments of shock, or become

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[91] Manuel Delanda, *Assemblage: A New Philosophy of Society*. New York: Continuum, 2006, 18-19.

[92] *ibid*.

[93] Stewart, *ibid*.,1092.

resonant in everyday sensibilities, or come to roost in a stilled scene of recluse or hiding."[94] My work with Sokhna Khady traces such radiating lines of affect: from spiritual, moral, and domestic interiors, through the public arena, and straight through the structures of postcoloniality. In tandem, my workas a researcher is to take up, amplify, and produce work that reonates with Sokhna Khady's project. Like Sokhna Khady, I am charged with lending insight and representation of the materials at hand as I contribute emergent understandings of my own.

A Space of Generation

At the threshold: when my Yaay Fall guide and I cross it well after 10 p.m.–the time for late Senegalese dinner–Sokhna Khady's family is in the *salon* conversing and relaxing.[95] There, Sokhna Khady sits with a pair of fraternal twins on her lap, circled by her husband, a smiling giant of a professional wrestler named Baye Cheikh Sylla, her oldest daughter, Mame Bintu, and four teen boys and girls.[96] These are her talibés, or religious devotees who have avowed service to Sokhna Khady's project; she feeds and houses them as the entire group works to establish and inspire spaces for Sufi worship throughout Senegal. The Yaay Fall introduces me as a friend of the Guediawaye healer; in my best custom, I circle the room, shake right hands and curtsy. The talibés open a space for me on the couch opposite Sokhna Khady, as she prompts me to tell the group, in Wolof, about my project with women's voicing in Senegal. I tell her that I have been inspired by her work all year, and that I would like to learn more about what she does so that I

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[94] *ibid*

[95] The Wolof term salon has been incorporated from the French to describe a central courtyard or domestic gathering place in Senegalese architecture; it is also a waiting room for visitors.

[96] The *mbërr*, or Senegambian professional wrestlers, often associate with regional griots and artisans. As [customarily]representatives of the *ceddo* warrior class, they often ascribe to the ethos of Baay Fall -style Mouridya, which emphasizes intense labor and a dedication to traditional aesthetics.

can share it with my students, colleagues, and the public. I tell her that I want her to think of me as a student, and that I would like to learn about her work on her terms. Without a question, Sokhna Khady tells me to return in two days well before lunch, and that our work will begin. This is her first work with a researcher and foreigner, but she will engage our project with the same improvisatory confidence that carries her chants. Seated amongst her talibes, I become a student of a different sort; their work is to strengthen the body of the Mouride order with their devotion; mine is to increase its profile–and Sokhna Khady's cache–in the global context.

For all the public registers of Sokhna Khady's voice, our work together unfolds almost exclusively within the calm interior of her home, where life churns within the 9'x12' walls of her clean, tiled, white-walled salon. The space is lined with two handmade maroon couches and photomontages of the Sufi saints: they stand peacefully on clouds and, with the Sufi holy city of Touba at their backs, gaze inward toward the inhabitants of the room. I sit for my first extended visit with Sokhna Khady, dressed in my freshest wax-cloth couture to mark the honor of the invitation, and I wait. The couches of this living room are lined with a revolving cross-section of the Dakarois demographic, and I begin to realize that I have come from the reception room of one spiritual healer to another. Each of these visitors has come to Sokhna Khady with a special desire or problem that demands answer: a young man needs advice to win over a reluctant lover; gossiping teen girls have a social rivalries to solve; noble matrons in embroidered robes and matching costume jewelry reckon with jealous husbands. One shakes my hand politely and meets my gaze through a searing black eye; she looks at me knowingly, indicating the problem for which she has come to seek Sokhna Khady's aid. Unsure of my place in all of this, I station myself at the far side of the room, engage in polite conversation with guests, cast my eyes

downward, and spend most of my time thinking and listening: a research regimen that has become common to my fieldwork in Senegal.

In the midst of a power crisis without electricity for fans, I settle into the shade-cooled breeze of the salon, thinking and listening. Amongst her visitors, Sokhna Khady's three children hold court. Each is named after a figure in the Sufi sainthood. Joyous little Xadim and Mame Diarra, 18-month-old fraternal twins, team up to shout at passerby from the balcony or to play with a guest. I have made a friend in Mame Bintu, a bright-eyed five-year old little girl who often serves as my interlocutor in this homebound field. She is always at my side, using her performative finesse to teach me new words in Wolof: *fowkay* for toy, *jarra* for bracelet. My heavily-accented Wolof doesn't phase her, as her family line has practiced the arts of musical interlocution and pedagogical poetry for millennia. Like the Sufi practices from which they draw, these griots operate at the seam of the esoteric and the public: the inspiration and the broadcast. Their work is to mediate, to translate, and to teach.

In her ritual room next to the salon and shielded from view by a billowy brown curtain, Sokhna Khady works steadfastly. As she hosts the matrons, she calls me in to let me know that she is looking forward to our conversation and hopes I can keep waiting until she has remedied the problem at hand. I have been at the house for eight hours. I see that she has on her lap a platter woven of coiled, bound coconut leaves, and seven cowrie shells, which she sweeps across the textures of the platter with her cupped palm, and gathers into its center.[97] She looks closely. In them, she reads the fortunes of those who enter her home and determines the course of action by which their problems will be resolved: mystical handwriting and incineration, the wrapping of

[97] Cowries and platter: *petaw* and *leyu* in Wolof.

Qu'ranic verses in a bound leather gris-gris sachet, calm goat sacrifice by her assistants in the nearby dust. While she never mentions this work to me directly, she pulls me in from my station in the living room to witness her motion; she reads my face for a reaction and sees that I've witnessed these esoteric practices before. I wonder what she is thinking and why she has taken this interest in me.

Sokhna Khady's Wolof-language job title is *gëstukat*: "one who researches." The skill with which she gains knowledge of a client's circumstances is *gis-gis,* literally "sight-sight" or deep envisioning. This insight is the domain of Senegal's marabouts, or practitioners of the occult arts. Soon, Sokhna Khady will write words of the holy Qu'ran and seal them in a silver ring for my own protection in my work, that of a researcher. In Wolof, my title and hers are one in the same, and each of our callings require the careful cultivation of experimentation, imagination, and insight into the materials at hand, a process that resonates with Zora Neale Hurston's definition of research: "...formalized curiosity. It is poking and prying with a purpose. It is a seeking that [one] who wishes may know the cosmic secrets of the world and they that dwell therein."[98] In our ethnographic home, Sokhna Khady and I poke and prod, sweep possibilities over the textures of our experiences, and figure out a new research partnership by which I become less an observer than an acolyte.

ETHNOGRAPHIC INTERIORITY

My curiosity about Sokhna Khady's vocal performances of holy zikr has in a single gesture become a study of her domestic world. By her own design, Sokhna Khady's has recast my ethnography of her streetbound performance into that of her home life; her salon, kitchen,

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[98] Zora Neale Hurston, *Dust Tracks on a Road*. New York: Arno Press, 1969, 143.

and spiritual workroom have become the field for this work. She has me working in ten-hour shifts buoyed with a host of treats and flavors: cups of spiced Café Touba and plates of fish and fruit; she invites me to arrive in the morning, when things tend to be calmer and she has a few minutes to greet me and catch up with my news over milk and buttered bread. After the early afternoon prayers Sokhna Khady cooks, with great care, traditional mutton and peanut sauce dishes that we eat from a single platter in a circle with her family and guests. She divides and distributes the meat, sauce and vegetables from the center of the plate across the whole of the spread; in doing so, she pays special attention to the preferences of her guests. She reads me right away: I get extra carrot and the leanest bites of meat. After lunch, we wait for two rounds each of tea as the kids divvy up my gifts: liters of Africa Soda and a few little toys and candies. Between the events of eating and drinking, we sit for hours together in the salon as the day winds from the arrival of one visitor to another. Amidst the electricity crisis of the Wade regime, the power in this neighborhood is usually cut throughout the afternoon, and we keep our movements slow so as not to work up a swelter without fans. The days revolve.

In Wolof, the concept of a day-long visit is called a *setsi*. Often a new friendship between women is marked by an invitation to "*setsilma*," or spend a day at one's home; a follow-up is both an expectation and an honor. Typically, the woman who hosts the setsi is too tied up with preparing a generous spread to sit and chat with the comfortable guest; her work in this ritual of friendship is to show a surfeit of *teranga*, or generosity. Most importantly, the guest has become publicly associated with the household she has visited, and has coolly invested her time and engagement in these new bonds. By entering into the domestic realm of another, she has reaffirmed the ethics of feminine friendship: a primary commitment to women's collaboration

upon which the Senegalese social system rests. This ritual of domestic integration speaks more loudly in Senegal than gestures of mutual confession, pairing up, dependence, or mutual exchange that mark many of my friendships and ethnographic relationships at home.

When I work with Sokhna Khady in the external settings of public religious rituals, I find that our domestic association is widened, amplified, and transposed to a street setting. When Here, I sit with her family and assistants. Mame Bintu nestles on my lap and alternates between napping and singing along. Baay Cheikh works as the bodyguard, wiping Sokhna Khady's brow, adjusting her microphone and handling ecstatic faithful who cling to her side. Sometimes I hold her purse or wire her with a recorder for a document for my fieldwork that she will also release to he CD peddlers for publicity. Worship is a family affair. Often, she tells her friends about my association with her home: "Mame Diarra must be tired," she says. "She came to my house for dinner yesterday and spent the night with us before coming here." She hisses joyfully to me across the crowd to join her before her time at the microphone and makes polite but signified comments about a particularly boastful or long-winded male religious speaker. Around us are her kids and assistants from the house, all in matching Sufi robes, smiling as the twins shake down a cousin for her purse.

In Sokhna Khady Ba's salon, an archive of specialized knowledge, the social importance of feminine interior spaces, and the power of voice come to light. Like the cowries from which Sokhna Khady reads her fortunes, the substance of this artist's work emerges in the textures of repeated observation, reading and conversation: an attention both to the object of study itself and its emerging relationship to others. The discourses on Sufi voicing, Wolof ritual, and Senegalese sociality that make this process legible offer critical perspectives on the global power of

women's creativity, and its status as a critical source of engagement for ethnographers concerned with the power of emergent African cultural formations.

In the course of my twice-weekly visits to her home in the dusty-season months of spring, Sokhna Khady and I find occasional time to talk about her family, her work and her theories of voice and power with my field recorder resting on the floor between us. In the year since my return from Senegal, we continue these conversations by phone every few weeks as we plot new directions for my research and her own musical projects. She draws from a concept of interiority she alternately calls in Wolof *dolewu biir* or *disu biir* (force or weight that is within) and in Arabic, *batin*, or a hidden knowledge, esoteric substance, and power within associated in Sufism with the relationship of Allah to human life.[99] In these conversations, Sokhna Khady describes the critical importance of interiority to the Wolof-Islamic concept of *zahir*, or "that which has become manifest": her voice, her practices of mystical writing, and her household.[100] In the following passage, she describes three "doors" by which these interior potentialities have manifest themselves in the social establishment. Each of these emphasizes a process of externalization and materialization. She tells us that she draws the strength to affect the world around her from the substance of her dreams, her faith, and the seed of womanhood that she holds in her person. She describes her movement from the immense poverty that most rural Senegalese–and particularly religious talibé who devote most of their time to Qu'ranic study–experience to her status as a leading figure in her Sufi order.

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[99] In conversation, Sokhna Khady elaborates that these two concepts are interchangeable to her; in doing so, she parallels the Islamic and Wolof notions of interiority.

[100] These definitions are drawn from the Wolofized Arabic of my consultants in the Senegalese field. These represent common Sufi etymologies drawn from Tijani Sufi practice rather than academic Arabic or theological Qur'anic study.

In this ethnographic space, I want to let Sokhna Khady's story stand uninterrupted, and to invite the reader to trace its three cycles and the blessings by which they are buoyed. I want to stay true to the rhythms of her invocations of the saints; to her deep Wolof practices of phraseology, hyperbole, and repetition; to her griot's tendency to circumlocute. I want to take up, in the textures of this ethnographic representation, the spaces of imagination and mystery that shape Senegalese practices of communication. Where the poetry of Sokhna Khady's Wolof language and the immense character of her voice evade the reader, I draw attention to Sokhna Khady's poetic composition: its outer form and style and its intricate inner significations. A world of meaning lay within.

I AM A WOMAN WHO CALLS ALLAH'S NAME

> I was so exhausted. I was saying, I'm not going to talk about that anymore, but I cannot say no to you. I swear on Serigne Modou Moustapha, I was so poor, to the point which people gave me food.[101] My neighbor in Mbour Saly Neex-Neexal, named Serigne Samb, gave me what I ate. At one point, he didn't want to hide it anymore; he just wanted to let people to know that I was too poor: "Even if you like her, and you follow her, it's me who gives her food [because she is so poor despite]. What she eats comes from my house."
>
> And at that time, people would follow me. If you wanted for me to do a chant for you, and you sent me a taxi for transportation, the children would chase the car. At that time, Serigne Samb wanted to show people, "This person who you follow, what she eats comes from my house. And it's only the leftovers." Bilahi Wilahi Talahi.[102]
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> At that time, I did recitals of the Xaasiyda a capella, and started to do the zikr chants with drums. By Allah, I had the famous photo of [Sufi leader] Serigne Fallou, in which he is

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[101] The term Serigne–like the feminine Sokhna–is both used to designate a Sufi holy marabout, or religious leader, as a noble person in Senegalese society. Sokhna Khady refers to a number of Sufi leaders in this passage, but also uses the term to show respect to her male friends and neighbors like Serigne Samb.

[102] This is an Arabic-language oath ("I swear to Allah, I swear to Allah, I swear to Allah!") preferred by Wolof griots for its rhythm.

pointing, in my room. A white European gave it to me, and I hung it over my head on the wall.

And then Allah does this: when I am sleeping, I have a dream. The picture does "FRRRRRRRRR" and runs from the wall to face me. And hangs itself on the opposite wall.[103]

Do you understand? When it hangs itself on the opposite wall, it becomes like a TV. When it becomes a TV, Serigne Fallou Mbacké says, "Sokhna Khady." And I reply in the name of the saint, "*Mbacké*," and he points his fingers ahead, toward me.

And he says again, "Sokhna Khady Ba." And I say in the name of the saint, "Fall." And again, he points his two fingers toward me.

And he says again, "Sokhna Khady." And I say, "Fall." And he points his two fingers. And you know what? In the dream, in the pictures: on his left, his oldest talibés sit around him. On his right, many of his oldest talibés sit around him. That's what the picture did in my dream, and then it became a TV.

And Serigne Fallou acts so excited. And then he says: "I'm sure." And points again his fingers toward me. "For example...," he says, and points his two fingers. "The only one whom...," and points his two fingers. "The one whom..." and points his two fingers. But he doesn't finish his phrase.

But he points his two fingers and indicates that I am the one. Bilahi Wiahi Talahi. Do you understand?

And I get scared, and I get scared, and I wake up and I cry. After the dream, I cry, because I am so poor, but when I have a dream of Serigne Fallou, I have hope...Because I know only that life will one day be fine. It will be so pleasing. Bilahi.

When I wake up, I continue my hard living. Three days later, on a Tuesday, a guy named Malik Gaye comes to me and gives me $15.[104] And three kilos of sugar, and two kilos of rice. I don't have money to buy food, but he gives it to me, and I cook my lunch.

And I take that sugar, and I take some of the money and buy Café Touba, and I make the café, and I go to the beach to sell it there. What I am selling, Allah does this, I gather it with fataya and beignet. Then, I start selling dinner from a table [as a street vendor]. My

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[103] Sokhna Khady actually changes verbal tense throughout her stories; there is an easy slippage–particularly in "deep" Wolof like Sokhna Khady'–between the past and present progressives, and the simple present that reflects a regional difference in the ontology of time.

[104] "*Junni ak juroomi temeer*" in Senegalese currency (7500 CFAs, or about $15 American).

business has grown—I have a lot of customers now, and I cannot walk with the big coffee container—I have to sit in one place with it. I make a table, and I write on it, "*For the love of* Serigne Fallou." I sell café, and *chakry* and *ngallah*, and *ceere basse*. And sometimes I do *cous cous* and *chakry*. The next day, I do *ferrer* and *ngalax*, and the next day, I do *fois* and *chakry*.[105]

That's what I was doing, and at the end, the white people who were taking dinner at Chez Peulo, the restaurant in front of me, stopped going there and started having dinner at my table.[106] And the owner of that restaurant came over and yelled at me, Allah bless him. He scared me because he said, "You don't have a right to sell here, because you don't have the proper papers." [...] And he said, "If you continue to sell, I'll take you to the police."

And me, I wasn't scared, and I continued my business, and finally, it was him who stopped selling. Bilahi Wilahi Talahi.

Then, I saw how I was rising toward [The Mouride Sufi Path]. People who were fighting me, I swear to Serigne Touba, it makes me sad for them. Because when we meet, if I don't give them ticket money, they won't be able to afford their transit home. There were people who were doing chants with me in the same program who were better than me. But right now, I think my success comes from that dream.

And what I'm telling you, it's a part of my past.

Now, the second door:

I swear on the Prophet Mohammed. I dreamed of [Sufi saint] Mame Cheikh Ibra, but not all his body. In my dream, I am standing against a white wall and see his shadow, large against the opposite wall, with his full head of dreadlocks.

Now when I try to touch the locks, he shakes his head...but all is only shadow. And he says to me, "Call Allah. You have permission to call Allah." But the way the wants me to call Allah in the dream, is to shout Allah's name as loudly as I can. My voice is so loud that it seems to go on forever.

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[105] Each of these is a special food in the Senegalese diet: the foods themselves are considered to define Senegalese culture, and the women of Senegal pride themselves on creating their own special technique and recipe. Sokhna Khady is known as an excellent chef.

[106] Saly Neex-Neexal and its nearby towns are heavily populated with European and American tourist who enjoy its affordable beaches and club culture. Her time of Qu-ranic study here accounts for Sokna Khady experience with relating to Westerners (through a translator).

I'm going to give you proof. I swear to Allah, [my religious mentor] Serigne Aziz Fall told me he knew about the dream. [...] After I told my mother and my two friends about the dream, Serigne Aziz Fall called me from [the holy city of] Touba, and said, "Yesterday I had a dream about you, and you were calling Allah in a way that made me wake up and fall down." Bilahi Walahi Talahi. You can call him and ask him [if it's true]!

Then, I grasped [the Sufi path]. I'm never going to have a step backwards.

A grandson of Cheikh Ibra Fall turns and tells me, "So the Path is proud of you because Cheikh Ibra made this for you in your dream."[107] And he is a grandson of Cheikh Ibra, and he knows what has happened. I am only a lowly talibé.

That was batin. My marabout says to me, I have done a special blessing for you, and if you don't make a mistake, you'll see your dream become manifest. And he says this because I was calling Allah in my dream.

I know that if I just continue forward, I'm not going to regret anything. So, Allah's name: nothing can have more batin than that. Don't you know: *"*La ilaha illallah Muhammad ur-rasul Allah. Sallallahu alaihi wa-sallam."[108]

Every person who says that, you know every person who says that, and faces death, his paradise is guaranteed. It's not a joke. So, then you must do that for all your life.

Don't you know, everywhere I go as a woman, Allah shows me the difference between me and a man who does the same chants. And there are some people who really cherish me just because I am a young singer, and they know that I am not that old.

The third door is:

When I call Allah's name, it changes the kind of person I am. Now, Allah's name is part of my body. I call Allah's name so much, that if you cross someone and you tell him, "The lady who was calling Allah's name last night had a baby today," he cannot believe [a pregnant woman could sing with such force]. Bilahi Walalhi Talahi. If you tell the last people who heard me call Allah's name: "The lady just had a baby," they would not believe it because the way I call Allah's name is so strong.

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[107] Serigne Cheikh Xadim Fall was the grandson; in regional culture, descendants are often thought to have some avataristic traits of their ancestors.

[108] This longer invocation is the full Islamic statement of faith, and is chanted repeatedly at most Sufi Islamic religious ceremonies; the Baay Fall and other groups of West Africa and beyond incorporate it heavily into their ritual song. It is the foundation of Sokhna Khady's religious singing, and her unique melodicl interpretation of the phrase is a favorite recording amongst young Muslims in Senegal.

> And Allah does this: if you call his name when you are in your last month of pregnancy, they say that that baby will be the son of light. That's why a woman who calls Allah's name cannot be the same as a man who calls Allah's name.
>
> You know, jiggen [the Wolof word for woman], jiggen's name is not jiggen. Jiggen's name is diiw [seed]. It sounds like, Djiiw diou genn, Djiiw wi genn to the word, "jiggen." But it's really "Ay Djiiw yu genn-la [they're the best seeds]."[...] Allah chooses women to be all the best seeds, and no one can choose better. Now our proprieter [Allah] makes this place for women. We say: "Djiiw wi nga xamnée [Allah does these seeds]." If you plant a seed then it grows, so that diiw begins to grow, when a woman becomes affected [pregnant], Allah has her call his name.
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> But the woman whom Allah sends, because she is meant to be the best, who strives to be like the Prophet Mohammed, now Allah will not leave her baby for anything. That's why a woman, if inspired by Allah to call his name, she must say it softly if if she cannot say it loud. Those blessings will help her during her pregnancy. Because in a part of zahir, if someone is pregnant, she calls Allah's name, and everyone knows she is a Muslim. It is like writing prescription, like serum, fortifiers: the fortifier of Allah is Allah's name. Nothing can be better than that. Nothing can be higher than that.
>
> I am a woman who calls Allah's name. If you see me, it is only batin.
>
> Look, every time I go to a tent to [chant my praise songs], and I meet other singers there, they only want me to sing last [for the largest crowd, after the other singers have ended]. That is Allah's doing. Nothing can be more powerful than his name.
>
> Yes, the batin of my voice comes from my dream of Mame Cheikh. I was yelling [Allah's name] in the dream, for what seemed like no reason. There is nowhere I could point where my voice had a limit. If I sing Allah's praises, my voice goes straight ahead and travels [forever] without stopping. [...][109]

VOICE, AMPLIFICATION, AND REVERBERATION

Sokhna Khady's narrative works in layers to illustrate the force of interiority, or batin, as it manifests in the external world, or zahir. Her pedagogy, rooted in the parables and poetry of her Sufi faith, suggests a mode of understanding deeply influenced by women's knowledge, religious ethics, and a nonlinear understanding of space and time. As I translate Sokhna Khady's

[109] Author interview with Sokhna Khady Ba, June 22, 2012. Translation and interpretation by the author and Bamba Niass.

narrative interlude from its original Wolof, I engage the textual refrains of a representational practice James Clifford calls "ethnographic allegory": "...kinds of transcendent meanings [that] are not abstractions or interpretations 'added' to the original 'simple' account. Rather, they are the conditions of its meaningfulness."[110] Both Qur'anic interpretation and the textual practices of ethnographic allegory involve both a descriptive surface and attention to deeper functions and levels of meaning: a clear social narrative and a moral, conceptual, or otherwise extrasensory interior that expresses itself through the medium of narrative structure.[111] The double structure of the allegory suits both the religious ontology and the ethnographic situation at hand in my work with Sokhna Khady. It also echoes the action of the voice as it uses the social materials of sound and language to give shape to thoughts, beliefs, morals, and desires. My work with Sokhna Khady has taught me that attention to this interiority is vital to the ethnographic representation of sound, voice, and musical materiality.

Sokhna Khady describes the ways in which a series of Sufi inspirations, generated in the interior spaces of dreams, esoteric knowledge, and the religious praise circle, are materialized in the form of social materials: business finance, vocal power, and the birth of healthy babies. The process of uncovering hidden meanings is fundamental to the social and spiritual lives of Senegalese people, who regularly engage in Sufi chant, Wolof etymology and wordplay, the "reading" of objects and signs, dream interpretation, and fables–to name a few–as paths to understanding their world. Gëstu–literally, research–infuses the cultural practices of the region. Ethnographic work situated in this interior landscape demands a methodology that is responsive

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[110] James Clifford "On Ethnographic Allegory," in: *Writing Culture*, eds. James Clifford & George E Marcus. Berkley: University of California Press, 1986, 99.

[111] *ibid.*, 101.

to indigenous understandings of what collaboration entails. My work in the home of Sokhna Khady, sounded in a nexus of the feminine, the intimate, and the spiritual, requires a collaborative ethnography cast in the register of the phonographic.[112]

Research involving musical interiority requires critical attention to the unseen locations of musical affect that run beneath surface texts. Representations of musical creativity are themselves emergent, and they overflow words, paragraphs and outlines with the insistence of their aesthetic fullness. The domestic research site, in turn, offers an overabundance of possible paths toward understanding the material weight of women's musical practice. I bring the critical methodologies of close analysis that are central to critical ethnography into conversation with the dense aesthetic materials at hand to trace out the question of what the musical voice does for women in Senegal. This ethnographic proximity demands attention to the elisions that glide over the formal containers of dance, song, instrument and player and into the murkier intersticial practices-in-between.[113] The objects of this study are the affects of this unseen work, this subterranean force, these echoes that vibrate through structure, and these complexities that erupt through the processes of representation and analysis that are often formally divided in ethnographic work. In the space of the musical break, the practices of representation and analysis, body and mind, are inextricable.

Accordingly, I work in the two overlapping critical registers: the amplification of the sensory, invisible and subterranean aspects of musical performance, and the reverberation of

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[112] See Fred Moten, *In the Break: The Aesthetics of the Black Radical Tradition*, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2003.

[113] "The effect of the unseen 'work'—that which takes place out of consciousness, in the relationship between creative practice and deep currents of change—is thereafter always a delicate matter of re-presentation and translation, with all the lapses, elisions, incompleteness of meaning and incommensurability of political goals these terms imply" Hall 1981, 23.

these musical materialities with other creative and philosophical formations. The former process allows the ethnographer to represent the materiality of cultural analysis; the latter suggests analytical conversation with musical practices that are themselves deeply critical. In my work on women's musical practice in Senegal, I seek to first amplify those moments that might otherwise be overlooked in conventional textual analyses of musical practice.[114] By amplification, I mean that I intensify, detail and otherwise turn up those registers of women's musical practice in Senegal that are obscured by logocentric understandings of musical textuality.[115] By enriching the sound of these signals through sympathetic ethnographic praxes, I attend to voices and practices that are rarely the object of conventional cultural study. This amplification is necessary to the study of women's music-making, which tends to unfold in private, ritual or deeply-signified spaces that are less accessible to the Western observers who are likely to conduct the disourses on African difference.

Secondly, I seek to sound the reverberations between these ethnographic understandings and the best theoretical chords of philosophy, aesthetic theory, Diasporic literatures, practical understandings and cultural studies. By reverberation, I mean the multiplication of the sounding object through and against the materialities of another through processes of echo and co-absorption. In acoustics, reverberation is the presence of sound that remains when the original object of sounding is removed; in this sense, I pause at those moments of ethnographic process in which an event, text or observation resounds sympathetically with another. As when a

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[114] By conventional, I refer to the tendency of pop music studies to reify authenticity arguments and visible materialities by focusing primarily on textual comparisons of verbal scripts (as with the Child's ballads paradigm), decontextulaized musical notation, or the products of the pop music industry (without accompanying work on consumption and performance practices).

[115] Derrida points toward a similar practice in his discussion of logocentrism and an alternative Spinozist ontology, in Jaques Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, trans. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins University Press,. 1976, 71.

particularly high operatic pitch evokes sound from a crystal glass, or a snare drum rattles when the pianist strikes a particular chord, the ethnographer's project and that of her consultant, although different, work sympathetically. Reverberation not only calls these complex musical materialities into relief; it also echoes practices of antiphony, or call-and-response, that are at the core of musical practice.[116] Further, the recognition of these compositional redundancies and patterns opens clearings to the larger ontological understandings that lay beneath artistic practice and the philosophical project.[117]

My status as a member of Sokhna Khady's household often subsumed the position of the ethnographic observer to that of collaborator: my role as a household member revealed my solidarity and service to her own project. Sokhna Khady put me to work immediately. She had me translate Wolof poetry into English and then record it for her to memorize for future studio work. Rather than focus together on a dialogic process in service to a single representational project, ethnographic collaborators locate and attune their own projects in a process of amplification and reverberation. While these multiple processes do not follow the systems of checks, balances and co-authorship outlined in many literatures on collaborative anthropology, they must embody the spirit of intentionality, self-criticism, sensitivity, and cooperation that collaborative anthropologies exemplify.

Sufi marabouts invite themselves into Sokhna Khady's dreams. Through processes of introjection, they emerge from the intimacy of her imagination to affect, through her body and

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[116] "Antiphony (call and response) is a core formal feature of [Black] musical traditions. It reaches out beyond music to other modes of cultural expression, supplying, along with improvisation, montage and dramaturgy, the full medley of Black aesthetic practices from kinesics to rhetoric." Paul Gilroy, *Small Acts: Thoughts on the Politics of Black Cultures.* London: Serpent's Tail, 1993, 138.

[117] See Bateson's work on aesthetics, redundancy and material patterning. Gregory Bateson, Steps to an Ecology of Mind. New York: Ballantine Books, 1972.

voice, the social world. When I return home to my apartment in the heart of Dakar, or further: to my study carrel at my American university, my work with Sokhna Khady continues to reverberate. Like Trinh's experience with the haunting sounds of Senegal as they invited themselves into her work, Sokhna Khady's voice invites itself into mine. Months after our first meeting, I continue to hear her zikr praise songs as they shoot through the soundsystems of the city, infuse the air near the market, and accompany my hours of writing field notes. Sometimes, I imagine that, instead of entering my home, Sokhna Khady has extended her own home to envelop me wherever I am; we are incorporated.

CO-WRITING CULTURE

Over my years in the field, I lend my field notebook to the people with whom I work. I began this year-long phase of research with eight black, unlined moleskines in my ethnographic supply bag, and a box of twelve Pilot v5 pens with which to write in them. I am particular about the way I lay the thick black ink on the dry pages, the symbols I use to call attention to certain thoughts, facts or observations, and the ephemera I choose to store in their pockets. Because my work with women is so often located in their home salons, these notebooks become scented with the omnipresent incense of their preference and soaked with their favorite mint tea. Different notebooks bear the scent of different consultants; different phases of my two years of work in Senegal. The ones that have traveled through the desert have dust packed into the crevice where the pages meet; some are stained with Café Touba or marked with a sticker given to me by a child of the house. The kids, for whom a notebook is a precious yearly purchase for school, treat my book with as much care as I do as when I ask them to draw or write in the book.

Mame Bintu, who is already learning to write, shows a special artistic talent, and so we spend hours drawing intricate patterns in the book. Enthusiastically, she is ready to fill the whole book with her drawings, but I need to ration the clean pages of my last field notebook to last through another month of research. As I prepare to go back to my own home for the evening, I hand Mame Bintu my notebook and tell her, "one more page only today." In Senegalese custom, I step through the house to shake hands with and thank all who have welcomed me today, including Sokha Khady, who insists, "Kañ ngay ñewat?" (When will you come to visit again?). Maybe Tuesday, I tell her. I'll call you. She opens my palms at my chest like a notebook to receive her Sufi blessings and speaks in the low tones of serious prayer in a mixture of deep Wolof and Arabic: "Yallah né Yallah defa jamm." (All the blessings of Allah for peace.) "Amen," I reply.

When I return to the living room, Mame Bintu is busy at work: she has drawn expert circles in the center of every remaining page of my notebook, at least 30 pages, front and back: dozens of little rings, like an arrow passing through my research, or an artery. "What is this?" I ask, astonished at her fast and cunning work. "Orange," she says pointing to one circle. "Pepper," she says of another. She finds another, a few pages on. "Tomato": the ingredients of our lunch. Mame Cheikh laughs when he notices this dedicated work and sees my surprise at this five-year-old's invention: this family writes culture right into the middle of this project I kept thinking was mine.

GËSTUKAT BII (THE RESEARCHER)

Through the medium of voice, Sokhna Khady Ba draws her knowledge of the world, her spiritual connection to the Sufi saints, her inner strength, and the resources and collaborators who

assemble in her home, into a body of work. This project works spatially–through the reappropriation of Dakarois public space and intersecting social networks–and temporally–as an emergent creative arc that accumulates over time and suggests a secure future for women Sufi praise singers and devotion to the Mouride order and Baay fall theology and morality. Like Sokhna Khady, I use my voice—amplified through the media of ethnographic writing, cultural research, teaching, and ethnographic film–to influence discourses and resources that might be drawn toward emerging global voices, and to contribute to a movement away from conceptual stasis when it comes to the creativity of modernity's others.

Thousands of women in Dakar cultivate musical projects of their own that resonate with that of Sokhna Khady's. Like her, they draw from a unique series of literatures, spiritual beliefs, traditions, and investments toward their own bodies of work. It is my argument that together, these musical projects on the part of Dakaroises women culminate in a body in sound: a cultural formation by which these women and their communities survive and thrive. Sokhna Khady's peers may direct their work to different series of audeinces or adapt their sounds and styles to different situations and media. At the same time, these projects hold together with a certain affinity; as they overlap in a women's culture of sounding in Senegal, they contribute to the conditions of each others' possibility.

In the next chapter, I discuss what I learned in my years of ethnographic collaboration with Njaaya Gueye, a young Dakaroise chanteuse whose work draws from discourses on African cosmopolitanism to command the world stage. As the dimensions of her work unfold through rhis ethnographic representation, I ask the reader to consider the ways in which Njaaya's work resonates with that of Sokhna Khady's. Both of these artists describe their work in the Sufism-

influenced terms of *zahir* and *batin*: the interior and the manifest; both represent and nourish their home communities in their performances to broader audiences; both direct their work toward greater equality for Senegalese women. Most importantly, each uses the medium of vocalization–of self-articulation–to imagine an alternative future by which their communities will survive and thrive.

CHAPTER 2: NJAAYA : A VOICE OF AFRICANITY

Yagg na, yagg na yagg na, degg la!
"It's been a long time coming, hear it!"[118]

-Leopold Sedar Senghor on decolonization, and Sista Njaaya on a lost love

Down the ragged beach from the grand mosques and monuments of Dakar, in the low-rent tourist beaches of Yann Bay's polluted industrial waterfront, the old palm trees are sparse and poorly nurtured. There are a few European vacationers scattered throughout this property, a hotel named *Finn D'Or*: a loose collection of round concrete huts painted with fading figures of voluptuous black women and random, imaginary ceremonial masks topped by tired grass roofs. Night has fallen; spotty floodlights make for a dramatic, if unpicturesque, chiarascuro of a postcolonial touristscape that has depreciated from somewhat seductive to somewhat abandoned. At the gate to the property, an inevitable handful of *sai-sai* hustlers stands ready with boards of red-green-and-gold wristbands and sunglasses for sale, or pockets full of smaller parcels. They are ready to guide any aimless European tourist or American exchange student to the markets, the clubs, or murkier activities. This neighborhood is one of many that comprise the unwritten Dakar: an unevenly developed economic landscape space that, halfheartedly stuck in the transition to modernity, is lucky to catch a few misdirected euros.

One of the *sai-sais,* dressed in Nike knockoffs and a t-shirt with the sequined outline of the African continent, sees me coming and eagerly approaches, proud and sketchy. He has been

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[118] From Njaaya's song "Bajjal", performed in her stage shows. Translation and interpretation by the author, from the literal translation "It waits, and it waits, and it waits, it's true!"

sent to find me by Njaaya and her two girlfriends, who are hiding on the dark side of one of these palm trees. As locals who refuse to buy eight-dollar colas at the empty bar, the women are not supposed to be on the grounds this late; the sun has set and the private beach has been shut down for security, but the guards seem friendly enough and look the other way for locals, as long as they are out of sight and quiet. The women are waiting for me in the shadows, and I see the black outline of Njaaya's high-fashion Zulu buzzcut against the gunmetal dark ocean sky. She and her two best friends: Mami, a polite grade-school teacher in a beige turtleneck and belted jeans, and Coura, a stylish uptown businesswoman with her thick dreads in a high wrap, are too busy making plans to return to their families' close quarters, which burst with four extended generations. Here, wrapped in shades of precious privacy, Njaaya's notebook is lain out in front of her, flat to the ground like a map. She's just recorded the video for *Mbindan* ("servant"), a song about the lives of poor young rural women in Senegal who are conscripted to work in middle class urban homes, and she is ready to make an intervention.

When I join Njaaya and her circle, they tell me that they are working to intervene on behalf of a growing number of impoverished Senegalese *mbindans*. Njaaya will act as an intermediary for young women who wish to sound grievances with their bosses. She points to her notebook: "These are plans for my advocacy program for *domestics*," she says, mostly in English, with some interwoven Wolof and French. When a young woman experiences problems with the *borom kër* (man of the house), Njaaya tells me, the singer herself will go to the employer and advocate on the mbindan's behalf. She has listed the items she will handle: the names and numbers of local woman's ministers and district mayors, an inventory of potential transgressions toward the mbindans, contact information for media outlets. Njaaya takes on the

role of the *femme militante* with finesse. She has styled herself as such since her early career in women's hip-hop collective ALIF (*Attaque Libératoire de L'infanterie Féministe*), carried it through her solo debut video, *Social Living*, and used its stylistic contours to animate her future work. As social circumstances for the people of Dakar change, her potential audiences shift in the flows of genre and media. And as her artistic status matures, Njaaya must reconsider and rework the style of her intervention with every project. She is an activist at the vanguard of an uneven and shifting political terrain.

The video for *Mbindan* will premiere on Senegalese television weeks later to phenomenal popularity amongst working-class girls and women across Senegal and into the neighboring countries of Mali, Guinea and The Gambia. Njaaya's gritty femininity–a style she describes as *naturale*–is a radical departure from the glossy couture for which Dakaroises women are known. Her figure is striking: Njaaya sings from a spotlight in the center of a dark room, dressed in the old undershirt and wrap skirt of a domestic worker. Without her usual eyeliner or lipgloss, she wraps her head with a faded black cotton cloth and uses the tricky phrasing of rural "deep Wolof"–the Senegambian colloquial–to thicken her poetry. Njaaya is crying, pleading to the camera, which stands above her like an abusive boss. She sings:[119]

Man dekk ba laa jogge man	*I came from my rural village*
Wacc si ngir daan sama dolé	*I am coming here for hard work*
Ngala bul ma door té bul ma sagg man	*So please don't hit or curse me*
Ngala bul ma def nii jaam	*Please don't do me like a slave*
Tanta nit donc la doon	*Auntie, I am a human*
Damay liggey nguir dundal sa ndaay ak sa baay	*I am working because I need to feed my mother and father*
Maay ki togg bammu saff tebu lekk jotté nguen berma	*I am the one who cooks tasty food but I must eat apart from you*

[119] See *Appendix A* for full lyrics.

Maay ki foot di passé nguen di saynse di ma dingat	*I am the one who washes and irons your fashions, but you tell me I am unworthy*
Tonton, man maay fowe kayam	*For uncle, I am a plaything*
Bes bu nekk mu taas samay sir	*Every day, he unties my skirts*
ba noppee naan man	*until he is done , then he tells me:*
Bu jip ma daqq la ci biti	*If he hears [that I told], he'll throw me out*
Woooy oooh wooy wooy wooy	*Cry, cry, cry…*

In Senegal, where explicit references to abuse and sex are either whispered in back rooms or deployed in the improvisatory songs of women's private ritual, Njaaya's public complaint represents a startling intervention into the conditions of domestic workers. Her willingness to engage a taboo discourse–and to annoy the upper-class families known to abuse their domestics–will make her a figure of both admiration and disdain amongst Senegalese publics: young women and girls from the village and Dakaroises fashionistas alike will rally to her side, while male heads-of-house will turn away from the family TV with the complaint that Njaaya "*defa nëw*": "is ugly."[120]

Meanwhile, Njaaya's reputation as a great beauty and a style icon amongst the young people of Senegal and audiences abroad grows with her every project. In the *Mbindan* video, Njaaya's beauty becomes a spectacle of tensions: bright almond eyes and delicate cheekbones offset an uneven smile; a completely bare face pulls her highly controlled, modern dance movements into estranged focus. Her willingness to shed the glamour of her germinal stardom for the rags of a domestic speaks to the young *mbindans* who will see the video in the course of their daily labors, and to the rural and poor people of Senegal for whom the realities of piecemeal

[120] I witnessed this on two separate occasions surrounding the release of the video: one concerning a Medina male head-of-household leaving the living room in which an mbindan and the women of her family were watching television, and another concerning an elder male from a middle-class griot household.

labor are a reality. The biceps that contour Njaaya's arms evidence the singer's own familiarity with heavy lifting: like her neighbors, she must bring buckets of water from a local well to cook and flush her home of sewage: she is an ordinary Medina Lebú girl. But something in the exaggerated size of her headwrap, the controlled tatters of her skirt, the modern dance that inflects her prostrations, and the self-assuredness of her decision to look so carefully decomposed, tells of a second register of representation. Njaaya's authorship of a gritty, self-consciously fashionable, self speaks as loudly as her lyrics and her political intervention. She animates her performance with the substance of her own artistic struggles in a local recording industry, in which she and other women artists are beholden to self-invested male producers and managers. As she signals simultaneous familiarity with tough manual labor and the smart flourishes of European style, Njaaya cuts a radical representational figure into the relationship between the postcolonial everyday and a world of music.

The confrontational stance Njaaya takes in her video, signaled by her implication of the viewer–to whom she directs her pleas–is drawn from a principle contemporary Senegalese hip-hop artists call *xeex*, or "fight." *Xeex* is most often deployed in the exclusively male Senegalese hip-hop industry to signal an oppositional posture to contemporary government leaders and policies, and it's lauded by European and American journalists and filmmakers who seek to document the hopeful politics of Third-World hip-hop.[121] *Xeex* both draws from and transforms the regional griots' mastery of the musical word for social advocacy. The griots' audiences share a deep knowledge of the codes of symbol, sign, and community secret that underly a poetic composition, while today's cosmopolitan Dakarois must make their politics plain to more diverse

[121] This hopefulness and focus on lyrical political activism and "positivity" is a trope in hip-hop scholarship that I critique elsewhere.

audiences. Njaaya, who is not from a griot family, perceives and plays upon the double role of musical *personalité* and political spokesperson that characterizes Senegalese musical culture. At the same time, she asserts her presence on the global stage as European promoters and producers offer opportunities abroad to artists whose work promises a good fit with the world-music cosmopolitanism. Above the gaze of the world music industry, Njaaya works at the interstice of exoteric internationalism and esoteric Africanity to make and remake her artistic self. This Dakaroise reflects the tension between the city's longstanding status as a both a space for global Afro-cosmopolitan creativity and a society struggling with the realities of life in the Third World.

Njaaya's choice to embody the domestic laborer is an index to her own struggle for artistic mobility: a constant process of re-creation and representation that I chronicle in this chapter. Like Sokhna Khady, Njaaya draws from a singular creative milieu to make work that is politically manifest, even as she aims her intervention to a different series of audiences–the Senegalese bourgeoisie and lawmakers, tastemakers in the global music industry, an emerging African fine arts industry–that lie somewhere between her immediate home-world and the divine. Her work articulates a new space for a feminist intervention for Senegalese pop: one whose politics focus on the realms of the domestic and the everyday even as they are deployed in the spectacular arenas of music video and World Music showcases. The work of maintaining this space requires intensive critical and performance skills on the artist's part: a process of self-articulation in which *xeex* is embodied by the feminine performer, whose contested body works out new politics of African self-representation. Here, I locate the politics of contemporary women's voicing in Dakar to outline a struggle less legible, but no less important, to the

livelihood of contemporary Africans: to imagine an African future, and to build its foundations from the representational materials of the present.

My overall project engages Dakar's phonographic register as a "body in sound": a self-sustaining, creative, and material cultural formation by which women locate critical resources in the context of postcolonial poverty and disempowerment. Here, Njaaya's projects join those of the broader Dakaroise women's musical community in this formidable musical ecosystem. Like her advocacy plan for domestic servants, Njaaya's songwriting skills are experimental and meant to make a real impact. The descriptive textures of *Mbindan* are shaped by a confluence of discourses in African music, from the advocacy of the West African praise singer to the tradition of political protest in popular song. Njaaya conducts these discourses to suit the political and social situations at hand as they intersect with the trajectory of her work. She cultivates new representations of Africa and African creativity at once in opposition to and in conversation with those conjured by modernist discourses of exoticism, Africanity and the "other."

While the young men of hip-hop youth resistance groups such as *Y'en a Mare* have been recognized by the international press for their political organizing, less visible (but no less critical) undercurrents of struggle also emerge from the work of women ritual poets, praise singers, and pop artists as they activate a legacy of regional women's sounding practices to effect social change. Njaaya works in the contexts of global aesthetic flows, the world music industry, and ever-changing articulations of Africanity and cosmopolitanism as she locates the body of her work in ethical relationship to other practitioners, institutions, and locations of postcolonial reality. In addition to the spatial dimension of this musical mapping, Njaaya works in a series of engagements with time: a present *cossan* (culture) grounded in the historical scope of *adda*

(custom); a futurity rooted in the cultivation of possibility in the present; a contingent mode of self-making in the six-minute space of a song, soon to be transposed into another self, another register. Robin Kelley describes the resonance between such a methodology and global Black aesthetics:

> Trying to envision "somewhere in advance of nowhere," as poet Jayne Cortez puts it, is an extremely difficult task, yet it is a matter of great urgency. Without new visions we don't know what to build, only what to knock down. We not only end up confused, rudderless, and cynical, but we forget that making a revolution is not a series of clever maneuvers and tactics but a process that can and must transform us.[122]

This chapter documents Njaaya's own personal maneuvers, tactics, and transformations through the medium of musical voice, and asks how her philosophical commitments enable her to cultivate power to sound a broader Black Atlantic desire to envision "somewhere in advance of nowhere." To this end, Njaaya orchestrates discourses on Africanity, radicalism, Sufi understandings of interiority and materialization, and domesticity to envision a self-written African futurity.

In this chapter, I will demonstrate the ways in which Njaaya's social spokespersonship represents an important contemporary form of Senegalese feminine *self-articulation* int he global context. The relationship of Njaaya's aesthetic work to the diffuse politics of the postcolony emerges in a contextual study of her writing, performance, critical knowledge, and attention to the textures of her work in light of the Euro/American "World Music" industry. As Njaaya remembers, imagines, and remakes her self-described "Africanity," she demonstrates the highly contextual, critical creativity that draws from local traditions of eloquence and aesthetic practices to lend the Dakarois arts their power-from-within. At the same time, she illustrates the external

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[122] Robin DG Kelley, *Freedom Dreams: The Black Radical Imagination*. Beacon Press, 2003, xii.

relations that take place through affective processes, couched in the language of representation, that are necessary to bringing resources into Dakar's creative community. Two critical media, highly valued by Senegalese musical publics, are essential to this activity: *baht* (literally, "voice"), or the force of articulation, and *tem*, or the "imperative to sing" established by a critically-informed community spokesperson.

POSTCOLONIALITY, COSMOPOLITANISM, AND THE POLITICS OF SOUNDING

Njaaya's creative arc is driven, in part, by a series of Senegalese social exigencies to which she responds, vocally: urban poverty, the need for youth and women's empowerment, an oppressive presidential regime. Many of her lyrics address these issues either directly or in the signified registers of metaphor and allegory, from her work with the all-women hip-hop collective ALIF to the poetry of *Mbindan*. At the same time, Njaaya meets the gaze of a broader global audience that has little understanding of its local political and linguistic contexts. Here, another, less evident, performative situation emerges: in her inhabitation of the figure of theAfro-Cosmopolitan, Njaaya recalls the global artistic legacy of Négritude and the Pan-African movement, captures the attention of the World Music industry, and cultivates the resources of foreign capital and publicity by which the Dakaroise artist nourishes her political work in Senegal.

Njaaya's voice works intersticially to speak to both local and global audiences. It responds to a shifting complex of exegencies that undergirds Njaaya's artistic projects: the *tem* to which she, as a seasoned urban songwriter and performer, is uniquely positioned to respond. The Wolof-language *tem/baht* concept of communication acknowledges the complexity of overlain, and often competing, situations that converge in a series of articulations. The griots' monologues

of the Senegambia region from which Njaaya often samples poetry and draws inspiration contain a complicated series of lyrical negotiations, declarations, praises, and interventions meant to answer simultaneously to a number of social and ethical situations. For Njaaya, *tem* is the increasing market for and abuse of Senegalese domestic workers. Njaaya commands her baht-both her voice and her expertise in using it–to speak both to the families who abuse mbindans and to address international audiences, whom she hopes will admire her work and nourish it with resources. The poetic, aural, and performative aesthetics of *baht*–the complex medium of communication–allow a performer to elide multiple, shifting and conflicting *exegencies* in the space of a single performance, over the course of a career, and across a body of aesthetic work. Njaaya, who as a non-griotte does not have the kind of colloquial mastery only available to that caste, is able to activate the aesthetics of cosmpolitanism to turn the ears of her home audience toward her message.

Across the creative projects outlined in this ethnography, the voices, bodies, and projects of Dakar's women artists become media by which the struggling population of Senegal–the "Others" of postcoloniality–make their presence matter. My interest is in displacing research on African creativity based on a *responsive* politics of anti-imperialism, decolonization, and protest for a fuller understanding of the *creative* polyvalence of Third World struggle as it is articulated by the young women vocalists of Senegal. As I contextualize a series of Njaaya's performative projects in this chapter, I will show how she must negotiate the exoticizing gaze of the European music industry as she works to displace the knower/known dichotomy of postcolonial modernity with a command of her own. In Njaaya's work, carefully attuned to her shifting performative context as she perceives it, she enacts a generative power only available to an artist who

maintains a certain artistic mobility as a result of her creative unknowability.[123] The deeply critical political work that undergirds her projects, cast in the form of pop song and music video, evidence a deeply critical conversation with those performed by theorists who work from a special relationship to objecthood. When contextualized in the global political dimensions of Njaaya's voice–and her right to sing–come into high relief.[124]

Mbembe describes processes of African postcolonial representation in terms of inscription. African self-representation, he finds, most often fall into one of two parallel grooves, each of which limits the possibilities of global African self-representation.

> The first of these is what might be termed *Afro-radicalism*, with its baggage of instrumentalism and political opportunism. The second is the burden of the metaphysics of difference (*nativism*)…The first current of thought—which liked to present itself as "democratic," "radical," and "progressive"—used Marxist and nationalist categories to develop an imaginaire of culture and politics in which a manipulation of the rhetoric of autonomy, resistance, and emancipation serves as the sole criterion for determining the legitimacy of an authentic African discourse. The second current of thought developed out of an emphasis on the "native condition." It promoted the idea of a unique African identity founded on membership of the black race.[125]

Neoliberal discourses on African creativity position Africans in either of two embattled modes. The first, the figure of the martyr beholden to a certain register of clearly resistant, oppositional politics, limits African creativity to the responsive, the defensive, and to Black affectability.[126]

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[123] See Trinh Minh-Ha,, and Thi Minh-Ha. *Woman, Native, Other*. Vol. 108. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1989.

[124] Adrian Piper draws from her extensive philosophical exploration of the Kantian subject/object split to perform a radical, unknowable Black objecthood that disrupts the everyday public reproduction of these structures by its very radiating presence: screaming down the streets in New York City, sitting on a homeless park bench or positing its raced-and-gendered self in the center of Max's Kansas City, Piper lays bare the contingency of modern epistemology in the face of radical Black performance. See Adrian Piper, *Out of Order, Out of Sight: Selected writings in meta-art 1968-1992*. Vol. 1. MIT press, 1999.

[125] Mbembe, "Self-Writing," 240-241.

[126] Denise Ferreira Da Silva. *Toward a Global Idea of Race.* Vol. 27. U of Minnesota Press, 2007.

The second is a global "other" whose self-contained, unchanging sociality does not carry political weight in a modern world system: a static African identity without traction in the context of modernity. The possibility of a kind of radical alterity, or self-determined difference, beyond this binary, and the assertion of alternative ontologies of being-in-the-world, are smothered in these dual models of disempowerment. Njaaya's dual perforative situations– the Senegalese political emergency (to which Njaaya the activist must respond) and the European gaze toward the African Other, echo Mbembe's model. At the same time, Njaaya's *baht*–the power of her voice and the creativity of her self-articulation–allows her to work beyond these constraints to build a world of possibility for herself and her community. In the work of Njaaya and her peers, we locate a third series of political possibilities for African creativity: an emergent politics of critical self-authorship independent of, but in affective relationship to, the conditions of the postcolony. Together, they represent a specific origin in contemporary Dakar's place and time while also staking their claim to artistic modernity, a "special power" Gilroy locates in their very "...doubleness, their unsteady location simultaneously inside and outside the conventions, assumptions and aesthetic rules which distinguish and periodise modernity."[127]

The Other of binary difference between modernity and the postcolonial African is re-instantiated in the double figures of the Afro-revolutionary and the exotic *sauvage*. These two strategies manage to hang strangely together in the fractured mirror that is North Atlantic music industry's concept of African authenticity. European bohemians, self-styled NGO activists, record labels readily consume incoherent amalgamations of the two contrasting discourses that mirror Mbembe's two representational traps: *Fela!*-style shirtlessness and big Afros, trapped in

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[127] Gilroy, *Black Atlantic,* 73.

the safe, kitschy aplomb of the Afro-retro, decorate concert halls that echo with compositions calling for a revolution that is meant to have a contemporary valence. The project of recovering an exotic self in the name of resistance, Mbembe finds, is trapped in this binary, as only processes of emergent stylization manage to move beyond the postcolonial disintegration of past and future from the present:

> Because the time we live in is fundamentally fractured, the very project of an essentialist or sacrificial recovery of the self is, by definition, doomed. Only the disparate, and often intersecting, practices through which Africans *stylize* their conduct and life can account for the thickness of which the African present is made.[128]

Mbembe locates African futurity in an assemblage of practices, enunciated in style. In this light, Africa itself becomes an aesthetic construction; a series of stylized discourses by which diverse individuals found resonant projects. As Senegalese anthropologist Cheikh Anta Diop suggests at the top of this chapter, Africans are invested in modernity and the resources that accompany it; in their creativity, they are neither bound to a negative politics of opposition nor to an existence outside modern systems; instead, they negotiate these multiple worlds of belonging in the textures of its self-writing and the "thickness" of the "African present."

As they assemble a world of discourses on postcoloniality, alterity, and the Black Arts under a concept they call "Africanity," Njaaya and her peers imagine a different horizon of artistic sovereignty, distinct from both the world of ethnic tradition and the trends of global pop: one that works for these young Africans in the context of their own circumstances. These self-described *radicals* draw from a legacy of literatures on Négritude, the Third World, and Pan-Africanism to make a space for themselves in global pop. Following the germinal work of late Senegalese President and Négritude poet Leopold Senghor, revolutionary filmmaker Ousmane

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[128] Mbembe, *ibid.*, 272-73.

Sembené, and Afrocentric social scientist Cheikh Anta Diop, the young artists of Dakar navigate questions concerning the relationship of artistic radicalism ("*xeex*") to the arts. These discourses echo Fanon's work on postcolonial Blackness, in which he engages the modern performances of differentiation by which humanity becomes divided into supreme white (masculine/North Atlantic/capitalist) *subjecthood* and Black (colonial/southern/feminine) *objecthood*.[129] Fanon locates the potential for a disruption of this process in the embodied psychoanalytic, poetic, and revolutionary *being* of modernity's "others."[130]

As her story shows, Njaaya establishes a territory of in self-sovereignty as she uses the media of body, voice, movement, and staging to craft an emerging, radical "Africanity" on her own terms. Here, radicalism as enunciated by Njaaya and her peers is the emergence (and often solidarity) of a plurality of counter-hegemonic projects—particularly those concerning the ongoing exploitations of African and Afrodiasporic people–as they collect around a series of shared aesthetic practices. These regenerative creative modes find a special intensity in (but not an essential nor authenticating relationship to) Black Diasporic creativity, and Njaaya uses them critically to shape her work.[131] Because these practices have a particular creative ability to transpose between the aesthetic, political/economic, and philosophical registers, they work

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[129] See Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture.* New York: Psychology Press, 1994.

[130] For practitioners of Africanity, the question of the radical begins with the materialization of critique in praxis, which calls into relief the political weight of critical understanding. Because praxis demands affective proximity and continuity with those political structures, critical practitioners recognize their transformative work as co-constitutive of reality rather than as its immaterial counterpart. The recognition and critical cultivation of the practical dimension of understanding toward change. See Karl Marx, "Theses on Feuerbach." T*he Marx-Engels Reader 2* , 1845, 143-45.

[131] These include antiphony, reversioning, improvisation, polyrhythm, and assemblage, as they work themselves out both in the shape of her song and the spectacle of her performance. These kinds of practices have been located by a number of scholars of Black Aesthetics, including DuBois, Baraka, Farris Thompson, and Maultsby and my abbreviated list is drawn from these sources.

transformatively even as artists strategically elude mediation.[132] Amiri Baraka connects these strains in the cipher of his "changing same" of Black aesthetic practice and points to the intersections between Black Radical/Black Aesthetic thought and the cultural study of music.[133]

For Njaaya and the young cosmopolitans of Dakar who are her peers, Africanity represents a series of hopes: praxes of questioning, locating and transgressing structures of African disempowerment; of troubling the postcolonial status quo; of breathing into a regime of self-making that will overflow oppressive structures of meaning, feeling, identity and language while materializing new possible worlds from the established. Njaaya's critical performances of her femininity indicate the power of Senegalese women's aesthetic practice in conversation with a third-world politics of representation.

The power of *Mbindan* emerges in its lush aesthetic textures as well as its lyrical content. Njaaya's voice tears through her song, full-lunged and open-throated. She wails the song's lyrics dramatically and leaves the final refrain weeping: "Wooy-wooy-wooy" ("Cry, cry, cry"). She has written her lyrical stanzas to end in long vowels, heavy with melismatic turns of her own poetic invention. Because the Wolof language is imbued with the possibility of communicative rhythm– a suspended vowel indicates intensity and proximity, while a clipped utterance indicates finality– it allows for this stretching, bending, dramatic and temporal suspense while Njaaya's writing takes unexpected conceptual turns, lingering lines, and melodic interjections. Its fine poetic

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[132] The cultivation of these practices of self-regeneration may be the "powers from below" discussed in the Black Aesthetic work of Asante, Baraka and others, or present in "the sound of Africa" as explored in Louise Meintjes, *Sound of Africa!: Making Music Zulu in a South African Studio,* Durham: Duke University Press, 2003.

[133] This question points out that the idea of what is radical is hotly contested. This is especially true when it comes to questions of philosophical, Black Radical, Black Aesthetic, Marxian, artistic and Cultural Studies canons. In this chapter, I am interested in the coextensivity of the theoretical, political and aesthetic projects that collect around the term "radical" rather than their generic categories.

craftsmanship is not lost on the people of Senegal, who list her as a musical pioneer with top billing in hip-hop, acoustic, and self-defined oppositional music/art events organized by various youth political collectives, even without a full-length album release.

When the video for *Mbindan* is released later that fall, it will be broadcast in living rooms throughout Senegal, where families will settle in for siestas and mint tea over the long lunch hours when the children are on break from school. The *mbindan* will be in the central *salon* with the rest of the family, tidying after the meal and preparing the kids to go back to afternoon class. A number of them will tell me how much the song means to them; I will watch as Njaaya's performance is celebrated in Dakar satellite cities like Louga and Ndagane, from whence young women leave poor farming families for domestic jobs in the city. Teenage girls at the show, many of them *mbindans* themselves, will rush Njaaya to snap a cell-phone photo. At once, Njaaya activates important discourses in Dakarois salons; articulates a new style of Wolof-language songwriting; and establishes herself as both a member of the Dakarois artistic intellegentsia and an eminent advocate for social change.

Mbindan will be Njaaya's second solo commercial release in Senegal. The first, *Social Living*, appeared on Senegalese music television in 2009 and earned her immediate street recognition in Dakar. While American or European pop stars can to some degree measure fame by their incomes, recording contracts, and endorsement deals, a Senegalese artist's income is decimated by digital piracy, loose copyright law, and an inability to charge substantial fees for concerts. Prestige is instead a composite of other, less legible resources that culminate in something the Senegalese call *personalité*: the ability to gather, support, and retain a talented entourage, to possess the mobility of a European artists' visa, to maintain a lengthy music video

run in a high-visibility time slot, and to earn top billing in local music showcases. An artist with *personalité* must command high enough monetary rewards for appearances through pay and gifts to support and maintain her entourage of designers, management, backing singers and band. Because local Senegalese gigs rarely pay toward these expenses, profitable concerts at venues frequented by door-charge-paying European and American tourists must also be secured.

Although Njaaya has cultivated *personalité*, her access to the resources necessary to attain status as a self-sufficient professional artist is unsteady. Most importantly, a Senegalese star controls the resource of self-management, or the ability to choose collaborators and studios and to strike recording, performance and endorsement contracts in her own favor. Njaaya is poised on the cusp of high recognition and admiration throughout Senegal even as she lacks the resources to dictate the terms of her first CD release, which has been caught in negotiations between past producers for four years. She travels to Europe for world music events yearly, including Peter Gabriel's massive WOMAD festival, while she struggles to locate adequate pay for her band in the venues of Dakar. As a professional, Njaaya follows a career-long arc of experimentation in hopes she will find artistic autonomy; she is, like the *mbindan*, bound to patrons and managers for her minimal pay, but holds the hope that her work will one day yield new mobilities for herself and her community.

When she performs the song in one of Dakar's small sit-down night lounges, Njaaya transitions from the rhythms of sobbing that mark the end of a song into a war cry. She signals for the audience to chant with her, and then passes the microphone around the room as she breaks into a Lebú *Ndeup* dance of ancient Dakar: a ritual tailored to exorcising bad spirits. Across media, Njaaya uses intensive dramatic elements to engage her audiences: tears staunched

with a tissue, audience chants, personal stories. For Njaaya, *Mbindan* is one project in a larger body of work in which she inhabits a series of roles: this song directed back toward her home audiences is juxtaposed with sexy reggae dance anthems and political rally cries. Here, she embodies the domestic servant; in other performances, she will pose as a Saharan revolutionary; manifest the dancehall diva; and mine the torn-leather power of a character she calls the *sauvage.* At the nexus of these archetypes, and in the wake of her idols Josephine Baker, Tracy Chapman and Grace Jones before her, Njaaya's body becomes a powerful medium of experimentation and contestation; her work is productively entrenched in a thick series of discourses on blackness, the feminine, and Africanity. With each show, Njaaya's audience includes more local artists, intelligentsia, and media celebrities. To these and a broader group of European expats, American college students and fashionable young Dakarois elite, Njaaya's self-representation offers a reference point for their own placement in Dakar, in Africa, and in music: a process of self-making that undergirds her own desire for freedom of artistic movement.[134]

MEDINA: THE NEW COSMOPOLITANS

Njaaya is at home on rooftops.

In Wolof, the position is called *ci kaaw* (literally, "on top"). In Dakar, it suggests the vista of a hidden observer positioned atop a cement apartment house, alongside the equally-

[134] Njaaya is part of a movement of young Senegalese artists, designers and musicians for whom the representation of Africanity on the world stage renders both a personal opportunity and the weighty responsibility of spokesmanship. From the studios and salons of Dakar, these artists position themselves as the young representatives of African cosmopolitanism; their work materializes and conducts new discourses in representation. They are keenly invested in the global historicization of Diasporic music; they strategically position themselves differentially at home and abroad. The ways in which these artists articulate their work at this nexus of discourses reveals critical perspectives on the work of African artists. The young people of Senegal are thinking about, discursively engaging, and performatively articulating the negotiations between global and local; established and possible that have always characterized the shifting cultural sands of West African life. The dimensions of this creativity extend both to the ways their communities at home negotiate their postcolonial circumstances and to the formation of new possibilities for participation in the global social economy.

voyeuristic laundering domestics and exercising boys. As her clean laundry whip and dry in the arid Dakarois wind under the giant eyes of a woman's satisfied, sipping face on the Nescafé billboard that is her backdrop, Njaaya is expertly cooking a small tin pot of sweet mint *attaya* tea over an open propane tank, a job usually reserved for the teen boys of the family. It is night, and another of Dakar's notorious power outages has darkened the coastline below. It seems to amplify the ocean sounds and extend the signals of drums and voices, all cast in the Wolof language. We are situated beyond the reach of the colonial French of the downtown financial *plateau*.

The wind carries sounds of life that will move Dakar's lively night straight into the next morning, when Medina's handmade wooden fishing *galls* will launch into the sea and the business of the colonial freeway will heave along the coastline. These rough edges of beach were once the lagoons photographed by the French in the touristic era of the colony; their leafy folds sheltered the Portuguese slavers before them as they moved their human cargo out to sea. Watch the Lebú fishermen pull bountiful catches from their bright boats, painted with shaded eyes and the powerful names of the Sufi saints. We are *ci kaaw*: "above" the Dakar streets, under the big billboard, with a nice breeze cooling us as we talk about culture and politics in the westernmost point of the cosmopolitan African continent. There is a certain international cache for the Dakarois, who have enjoyed centuries of special visibility in Francophonie for their ambassadorial fashion, music, dance and intellectual production. To be a young artist in Dakar is to enjoy a nexus of cosmopolitanisms: Dakar's status as a financial capital in Franco-Arab Africa was established by the dawn of independence in 1960; its Wolof, Pulaar, and other inhabitants

have been known as the circulating traders of the Sahel for millennia, and the thick intermixture of resonant languages facilitates communication across cultures.

Unlike most of the figures who populate the world of Senegalese popular music, Njaaya Gueye does not come from a family of casted musical practitioners. She is descended from Wolof and Lebú ethnic families known for their fine metalwork and fishing (a social group called *nieños* in Senegal), she tells me proudly. The Lebú are Dakar's original inhabitants, a branch of the Wolof people who settled the coastline and mastered fishing and boatbuilding techniques long before the colonial invasion. Njaaya's ethnic inheritance has granted her prime family real estate on the face of the Senegalese coast, next to the family-compound-cum-broadcasting tower of Senegalese pop superstar Youssou N'Dour, close to the touristic artisanal village, and above the Lebú fishing galls that launch into sea and return with the innumerable bounties of big fish for which Dakar is known. With her father *genn* (literally, "not here"; it is a strong taboo to refer directly to processes of illness or death in Wolof culture), Njaaya's house is without the colorful furniture, curtains and hand-sewn and crocheted decorations that brighten even the poorest patriarchal households in Dakar. Mother returned to her family's household in the neighboring Guele Tapeé district years ago, divested, like many Senegalese widows, of her husband's property.

Like many of their neighbors, the youngest generation of the Gueye family struggles independently to keep up with the power bills and cost of rice and vegetables with which to feed the family. Njaaya's kind paternal grandmother sits at the threshold of the downstairs room, crocheting and chatting with the young faces that appear before her thick glasses. Twice a day, Njaaya climbs these stairs with a large bucket of water in each hand, her skirts raised to make the

heavy movement possible. Her lean figure and strong biceps evidence the rhythms of this work. On this thoroughfare, the spectacle of the emerging star's housework has become a landmark for the young people who pass. After lunch, she and her friends will climb the stairs to their rooftop, where they cook *attaya* under a huge billboard.

Njaaya leans over the little tin pot of simmering mint tea and swirls it around, checking the consistency. She adds a shot of sugar all at once and then watches it dissolve in the mix.

When she was an up-and-coming rapper with her first group ALIF (Attack Liberate de l'Infantry Feministe), Njaaya stationed a table down on the street and sold little plastic sacks of frozen hibiscus cider for food money. Then, Njaaya's star hung on the legacy of DJ Didier Awadi of pioneering Senegalese hip-hop group Positive Black Soul. As a teen with a phenomenal vocal talent and a knack for styling and songwriting, Njaaya sang backup for Awadi's various solo stage productions. A leader and thinker with a clear vocal and poetic talent, Njaaya became a visible female representative of sociocultural youth movement called generation *Bul Falé* ("don't care") after Awadi's anthem of the same title. When she moved on to join the other two women of ALIF, Njaaya cast herself as the true radical of the group, stomping through videos in a half shirt and harem pants and rapping interludes in a formidable mix of Wolof proverbs and an English *patois* drawn from her favorite artists in Jamaican dancehall music, a style admired in the cosmopolitan international dance clubs of the Dakar plateau. She sings directly to gossiping members of the community, but her oblique references to the corrupt Wade presidential regime are clear to listeners of her generation:

Dañu doon togg—togg ca bunt kër	*They are all sitting—sitting at the house door*
Leen umpuleen fuñu tollu dal di wax	*They don't miss a thing, talking everywhere*
Mooy sene xey ak gant, mooy sene añ ak reer	*That's their work day, that's their lunch and dinner*

Fokk ñu duggu ci yow force la xaritoo	*They try to get inside you and force their friendship.*
wooyo!	*Sing!*
Fokk ñu yakkal la soga am jamm	*They try to break you down to satisfy themselves.*
Wooyoyoyo!	*Sing!!!*
Fokk ñu masslaha sooga mana yem	*They try to negotiate with you to keep you docile.*

Today, as a ten-year veteran of the music industry, she plans new interventions with her friends who take breaks from selling dashikis printed with grass-roof huts and ornamental drums at the tented tourist hub of Sembadione market. They overlook the movements of fishing boats launching to sea and the taxis rushing over the Corniche highway, even as they launch movements of their own: young Senegalese artists, designers and musicians who are self-consciously asking how they might use their art to affect the political life of their city, country and region. They debate their struggle with the urge to decolonization and the tricky process involving (after Apter) "the indigenization of colonial culture itself."[135] They will sit beneath the sign and talk about what they will do for Senegal, for Africa. In the process, they collaborate on a vision of what their art will look like, will sound like, and where it will take them.[136]

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[135] My metacritique of Mafeje (1998), however, suggests that we pay close ethnographic attention to what goes on under the guise of cultural decolonization. What we find behind different strategies of cultural production and recuperation is the indigenization of colonial culture itself, such that its structures, categories, and even rituals of incorporation become Africanized as local, regional, national or even pan-african traditions." Apter, *ibid.*,145.

[136] The context for these discourses on global cosmopolitanism emerges from the lived reality of postcoloniality for Njaaya and her peers. I locate these artists' struggle in the register of style and the force of self-writing in song. In contrast to the fist-pumping lyrical tropes of last generation's world-market hip-hop stars, the essence of revolution is, for the young Afro-cosmopolitans, couched in a critical cultural conception of social change that works through circumlocution, radical movement, creative alterity, and processes of self-writing in style. Based in the notion of the artist as spokesperson, but not politician, Njaaya's art engages a complex of politics-on-the-move: a series of interventions that, together, represent a body of work that constitute her contribution to the African Renaissance. In positing this work amidst the binary politics of the dominant youth music arena, Njaaya makes space for new political articulations, social transformations, and emerging voices of African women artists.

Njaaya pours the *attaya* into two small glasses, aerating the tea and assuring an intermixture of elements; her precision assures a perfect foam at the top of each glass. The texture of the tea and the company it serves are as important as the taste.

Sipping on the rooftop, these are some of the young cosmopolitans of West Africa who draw the attention of record producers and development NGOs alike; they are making and re-making plans and interventions drawn from a legacy of young African creativity. This is a generation, the *Bul Falé*, who use the languages of hip-hop and reggae to launch their political projects. Among them are the Accro rollers, a breakdancing/rollerblading stunt crew, young devotees of the Sufi brotherhood the Baay Fall; Modboye Roller, a grinning patchwork *mannequin* whose roller blades are his only footwear, is ever-present. Astou, Njaaya's friend and self-professed female bodyguard, and a handful of dreadlocked scenesters who show their excitement at being in this formidable company. Aspiring young singers, dancers, and musicians congregate on Njaaya's roof as they organize musical events that often take the form of government-funded street festivals. Included in this group are musicians loosely affiliated with pioneering Senegalese hip-hop artists Positive Black Soul and Daara J; the former group staked Africa's original claim to the international hip-hop nation in the '80s and '90s; the latter carries a new torch for an emerging contemporary hip-hop style rooted in Pan-African choruses, Wolof-language lyrics, mystic dreadlocks, and interethnic clothing centered on an imagined contemporary, cosmopolitan Africa. Monthly, these characters gravitate to *Kool Grawoul*, a seaside dance party where outsiders to Dakar's mainstream *mbalax* scene prefer to go—Africans from other regions, expats and exchange students, Dakarois rappers, and staff from the nearby

Institute de la Culture Francais. For these young people, discourses in *Africanity* are enunciated in style.

Designers Cheikha Sigil (his last name—also that of his international clothing label–is the Wolof word for "stand strong") and Youssou make Njaaya's clothes from traditional patchwork of the *Baay Fall* and Congolese *wax* prints mixed with sexy stretch viscose and denim. The patchwork aesthetic is called *jaxas* in Wolof, and it's the preferred style of Sufi ascetics and the Dakariose elite alike. The fashionable Parisian *Bobos* who frequent Dakar's hottest clubs are drawn to the multicolored textures of the decidedly Afro-inflected style. They are a moving troupe who cultivate a style of motion: flowing forms that show ease of movement, looseness in the Sahelian winds, and a kind of stylistic know-how required to coordinate, wrap and tuck its flowing pieces with ease. Dreadlocks, which manifest both an air of cosmopolitanism and a series of religious significations for Senegalese Baay Fall Sufis, mark the group, which stands out amidst an Islamic urban center populated with a sea of freshly-shaved male heads.

Njaaya's clothes hang with movement of their own, true to the dance-friendly aesthetics of Senegalese couture. Like the Senegalese elders who wear the traditional dress of ineffable, shiny *grand mbubu* robes, Njaaya's dresses in aesthetic surplus associated with *personalité*. Meters of extra fabric are animated by wind and movement, accentuating changes in the artist's stance and attitude, lending itself to dramatic wrapping and unwrapping, and offering the vision of an artistic cipher that refuses to stand still—the creative heart of a spectacle. It was Njaaya who brought this style into its current vogue with the young girls of Senegal, who, following the

release of her video for *Social Living*, flooded the downtown Sandaga market with demands for Berber-style *chyaa* pants refashioned in knit cotton or denim.

In Senegalese tradition, the *attaya* circulates around our circle of eight in editions of two; the double glasses will pass through the entire group twice in our two hours on the rooftop. In small and equal parcels, Njaaya slices and distributes the beef *fatayer* pies she picked up at the boutique for the gathering. Njaaya is a hostess who has both curated the conversation at hand, and upheld the Senegalese value of *teranga*, or "hospitality."

The idea of Africa has again ebbed into high world fashion in the first decade of the millennium. Its popularity is documented across media, including a 2011 New York Times feature on the new "African Invasion" in popular music.[137] A year after she huddled in the shadows at Fin d'Or beach, Njaaya is at the center of Dakar's emerging international music scene: one populated by Spanish expats, American exchange students, Parisian Bobos and the Dakarois elite.[138] In this milieu of resources and expectations, Njaaya and her contemporaries simultaneously engage with and trouble the markers of authenticity that are the materials of their popular representations. The slightest movements have implications: in the contours of a new hairstyle, the incorporation of a talking drum to a reggae single in the studio, or in the switch

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[137] Larry Rother, "Indie Rock Embraces an African Invasion," *The New York Times*, Published: January 28, 2011.

> "Ethiopiques was huge, very influential, transformational even," said Jonathan Poneman, a founder of Sub Pop. "Not only was it great stuff, but it was put out in a way that was high quality, that looked good and was engaging. It was a combination of the exotic and the familiar, the kind of tasteful, definitive assessment of a place and time in global culture that anybody would love to be able to do."

[138] Bobo ("bohéme bourgeois") is a term used to represent a major trend-setting group in Paris targeted by a variety of boutiques. A Bobo is 'branché' – plugged in – anywhere from age 20 to 40, and lives preferably on the eastern side of Paris (rive droite). Worldly and traveled, the Bobo consumes differently than the 'rive gauche' (left bank) living 'BCBG'. Bobos blend with popular culture, yet distinguish themselves by mixing different styles. Individuality and self-experience direct their consumption, which ranges from simple to exotic or luxury products. Nina Sylvanus, "The Fabric of Africanity: Tracing the Global Threads of Authenticity," *Anthropological Theory*. Vol 7(2): 201–216, 213.

from one language to another in the course of a song, new negotiations between Africanity and the global popular are articulated. Njaaya keeps changing the makeup of her group, her genre, her style, and the character of her investment in Islam. She records in a wide series of studios with a variety of producers, and she crystallizes each new step in a process of rigorous study, discourse and critique.

It is the late-October party season, when the Ramadan fasting has ended and the toxic standing water of Dakar's dangerous rainy season has dried; tonight's rooftop conversation follows a DJ Didier Awadi concert at the Institut Francais de Dakar, a favorite venue for summering American undergraduate students, NGO staffers and European expats; the ticket charge of 8,000 cfas ($16.00 American) is far too steep for locals. Njaaya and her group of ten or so entered the gates easily, without charge. She used her fan recognition to gain VIP status to the show, but she came as a researcher rather than a peer: she is taking notes on every aspect of Awadi's performance. Soon, Njaaya will put together her own traveling spectacle with the goal of captivating international audience for her own.

Like the background of his recent music videos, Awadi's stage is dominated by looped black-and-white footage of the easily pictoralized, masculine visuals of Pan-Africanism and Black Nationalism: Patrice Lumbumba, Cheikh Anta Diop, Malcolm X. The figure of Martin Luther King dominates Awadi's stage show and video, and samples of his voice ringing "I have a dream," texture his songs. In a thirty-minute interlude toward the end of the performance, Awadi calls to his backing group, comprised of Dakar's best non-traditional musicians from throughout the African continent. "Revolution!" he chants, Black Power fist in the air, as a photo of Malcolm X reappears on the screen. "Revolution!" responds the audience of exchange students,

their spaghetti straps falling off their shoulders as they raise their fists in response. "I can't hear you!" he shouts in English. "I said, 'Revolution!'" "Revolution!" they respond again, mission accomplished.

After, we assemble at Njaaya's house; she passes another round of *attaya* as we talk about Awadi's multimedia messages. While on one hand, they appreciate his status as a classic figure in African hip-hop, and many have worked with his group as musicians or dancers, they are critical of his growing orientation to foreign audiences without a demonstrated dedication to causes in Dakar. "He fights only for himself," says one of the Baay Fall in the circle. "He lives in [bourgeois Dakar neighborhood] SICAP and has a beautiful house. He could do something about the water problem in Medina or build a free music studio for Senegalese musicians."[139]

Njaaya refuses to speak negatively of her former colleague, whom she says has periodically allowed her to practice singing at his home studio. She listens carefully to what her friends have to say about his artistic choices. Awadi, who was born to an upper class, Christian, transnational Beninois family, prefers to rap in French, a language to which many young people in Senegal have little formal exposure. This proximity to the colonizing forces of European language and religion do not resonate with Njaaya's Wolof-speaking Medina crowd. Awadi's claim to radicalism–as the leader of his group, Positive Black Soul Radikal, through his chants of "revolution," and in his citation of Pan-Africanist leaders–is distinct from Njaaya's project. If the radical, as Moten contends, is a general critique of the proper, then Awadi's bankable discourses

[139] SICAP is a series of bourgeois neighborhoods often occupied by baners and business elite, European expatriates and monied immigrants from nearby African countries. With better access to water, electricity, paved roads and newer buildings, he neighborhoods also have a reputation for housing cronies of the unpopular Wade presidential regime.

of resistance, rapped in the language of the colonizer, are counterweighted with colonial propriety.[140]

Awadi's own political aspirations further complicate his message of radicalism. In 2004, his support for presidential candidate Abdoulaye Wade was instrumental to Wade's success.[141] Retrospectively disappointed with this ultimately unpopular appointment, Awadi has gone on to support, lobby for, and perform in tribute to various political candidates in Senegal's multi-party political system. Because all of Senegal's parties represent ostensibly socialist projects, Awadi's support is critical to distinguishing viable candidates for young voters. This concern for election particulars over the dismantling of an entire postcolonial cultural system inspires the Baay Fall in our salon to dismiss his motives: "Faléwula," they say again and again. "Moo *genn* neex falé." ("He does not care about [anyone but himself]. It is better to care.").

Njaaya's careful critique will instead come in the positive formation of her own traveling project, which she will keep in tension to mainstream Senegalese hip-hop's orientation to bourgeois, expatriate, and non-African audiences. Where Awadi issues a call to "Fight the Power," Njaaya layers references to Islam, appeals to women leaders and artists, and arranges musical textures thick with ethnic rhythm-phrases, household instruments like the *lekkit* gourd-bowl, and tailored storytelling. Njaaya, unlike Awadi, also incorporates love songs into her repertoire. As she moves into a style of her own, her early political chants and dancehall anthems fall away for surreal poetics, storytelling and ruminations on social themes.

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[140] See Moten's characterization of the radical as "the performance of a general critique of the proper," "Case of Blackness," 177. My work in Senegal and on global radical musical practice necessitates a nuanced understanding of how performance, critique and the proper interact. Fred Moten, "The Case of Blackness." *Criticism* 50.2, 2008, 177-218.

[141] http://www.rfimusic.com/artist/rap/didier-awadi/biography

If DJ Awadi's ideas of revolution are instantiated in a chant amongst exchange students at the French cultural center, Njaaya's are less readily legible: shifting from personal perspectives to current events, under the cover of songs about love or travel, and willing to entertain a less immediate series of responses. This sense of contingency, calculation, and polyvalent intervention contrasts with the consistent revolutionary rhetoric of the dominant global hip-hop stage.[142] At the World Social Forum, for instance, a yearly event for global socialist youth in which Senegalese artists Awadi, Keur Gui Crew, and other self-professed political hip-hop and reggae performers from throughout the Black Diaspora are often featured, lyrics tend toward the Wolof notion of "*xeex*," or "fight." Another venue for these performances of "*solidarité*" and "*resistance*" is that of the World Music festival stage, where the nationalist rhetorics of Bob Marley and Public Enemy register with mixed audiences.[143] A common feature of these artists' modes involves the notion of artist-as-rebel, revolutionary, or resistor.

Rather than shoulder the weight of worldwide resistance, Njaaya's work speaks to the more immediate needs of her community and nation. While she embraces the cultural capital attached to branded Africanness on the world stage, Njaaya reconfigures the work of the "revolutionary" Black performer. Her decision to forego the comfort of the "revolutionary" archetype for the costume of a domestic requires experimentation, calculation and a good measure of critical engagement, and one that reflects a growing African critique of neoliberal ideologies. Cheikh Anta Diop's 1948 call for an African Renaissance established a discourse that has been taken up by a spectrum of artists and intellectuals. He posited a radically *other*

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[142] See Wole Soyinka,"Politics, Poetics and Postcolonialism." *Biodun Jeyifo*. Cambridge: Cambridge, 2004, xiv.

[143] "The result is a triumphant celebration of music as the global language of emotion." from Peter Gabriel's RealWorld Records website.

intellectualism grounded in vernacular traditions and European science alike. In the '90s, Post-Apartheid South African visionaries such as Mbeki saw the African Renaissance as the third stage of the establishment of a modern Africa: decolonization, the establishment of democracy, and then the arts and sciences, as described here by Archie Mafeje:

> In our circumstances, would this constitute a radical departure from what came to be popularly known as "independence" or a continuation of an unfinished revolution? In his inauguration as the President of the ANC, Thabo Mbeki proclaimed that in South Africa "the revolution is as yet incomplete". After the recent reversals in Eritrea, Ethiopia, and Zambia or upheavals in Zimbabwe, the same could be said. In the next round, what is it going to be? What is to be done or can be done under the determinate conditions in Africa? I believe that the idea of a new democracy provides the best orientation to the next round. Africa is pregnant with new meanings but its problem is agency.[144]

Mafeje's gendered metaphor is both historically grounded in the matrilineal rhetoric of Pan-Africanist rhetoric and a fitting one in terms of this study; agency is a central refrain for Njaaya, who has written dozens of songs on the theme of social obstacles and feminine perseverance. The question remains, however, as to what the next round has come to look like. Across the discourse, artistic revolution is a slow, emergent and highly discursive critical process, and one to which the tradition of long conversation over strong mint tea is well suited. Whether her intervention will forge a new World Music politics for the young Dakarois remains to be heard: the power of this potential is palpable *ci kaaw*.

"Africanity" and the Problem of Politics in World Music

> And we are told that the African who draws from European society those elements which are indispensable for the adaptation of his society to modern life, an adaptation that is of crucial importance to the survival of his people, is no longer an African!

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[144] See Archie Mafeje, *Democratic Government and New Democracy in Africa.* Prepared for presentation at the African Forum for Envisioning Africa to be held in Nairobi, Kenya; by Archie Mafeje. url: http://selvavidasinfronteras.wordpress.com/2010/09/24/a-mefeje-african-words-of-wisdom-for-correa-and-chavez/

–Cheikh Anta Diop, in Toward an African Renaissance [145]

The question of what makes African music hotly marketable on the world music market is one tangled in the complexities of postcolonial desires and discourses. In order to understand the negotiations between the creative work of Dakarois artists and the global market, one must take a nuanced look at the relationship between political, economic, and social situations and the power of the musical word. In the introduction of this dissertation, I addressed the notion of colonial *commandement*–the aesthetic of Imperial permanence–as its attempts to keep the economic relationship between Europe and Dakar in place. Here, I examine related modern discourses on African *otherness* that collect around the creativity of young people in Dakar and regulate the resources available to their work. With close attention to Njaaya's style as an articulation of the emergent politics of the African Third World, I outline the ways in which easy discourses on the "global village" serve to obscure the political dimensions of the local, ethnic, subaltern, feminine, juvenile, Sufi-ontological and other practices that animate Njaaya's work.

Appiah calls for such a cosmopolitanism of specificity and belonging against the notion of a global color-blindness:

> It is because humans live best on a smaller scale that liberal cosmopolitans should acknowledge the ethical salience of not just the state but the county, the town, the street, the business, the craft, the profession, the family *as* communities, as circles narrower than the human horizon that are appropriate spheres of moral concern.[146]

The resistant "Fight the Power" politics represented by DJ Awadi and his peers appeal to a particular understanding of the political as a space of binary struggle between a singular West

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[145] Cheikh Anta Diop, and Egbuna P. Modum. *Towards the African Renaissance: Essays in African Culture & Development, 1946-1960.* Red Sea Press (NJ), 1996, 40.

[146] Kwame Anthony Appiah, *The Ethics of Identity.* Princeton University Press, 2010, 246.

and its others. This groove, however, obscures a tangle of polyvalent postcolonial discourses: the *Négritude* ethos of return and self-determination; Communist oppositionality infused with historical Soviet sponsorship of the Senegalese popular arts; an American hip-hop cadence drawn from the multifaceted legacy of the Watts and Rodney King riots; the popular rhetorics of Nation of Islam and the Black Panthers amongst them. This valence of youthful hopefulness resonates with the worldly neoliberalism of NGO workers and foreign exchange students who collect in the Dakaroise cosmopolis with monetary and media resources in tow. Samples from King's "I have a Dream" speech are a staple in the audio production of these works, as are fist-pumping chants and black-and-white photos of former African leaders. These performances focus on retrospective visions of Black activism. They locate their aesthetic in an iconography of past leaders and classic popular music politics and draw from a mixed genealogy of radicalisms to resonate with Western audiences whose home political climates have been shaped by an equally dissonant politics manifest in the neoliberal conjuncture. These politics are bound up in narrow notions of development, the missions of NGOs, and a particular genealogy of hip-hop politics.

In Senegal, the work of fist-pumping "revolutionary" hip-hop groups like Awadi and Keur Gui also have a particular function for their primarily young masculine audiences. Estranged by the collapsed economy from investment in work, this demographic has taken on the necessary tasks of spectacular rioting against corrupt leaders at election time, participation in *manifestations* when the city's water or power is cut off for multiple days in a row, and vocalizing popular dissent through visible street and media discourses. In thirty years of mass legal and illegal emigration, young Senegalese men have adopted an investment in the rhetorics of American and European youth resistance that follows from these investments in working

overseas.[147] The dominant Dakar hip-hop notion, then, of a "fight" against a particular power resonates with these circumstances: the young men of Senegal are locked in a collective push against a complex of global inequalities. In the conjunctural context of the global economic crisis, a single revolutionary posture confronts the monolithic power of contemporary capitalism that stands before them.

Like that of revolution, rhetorics involving feminism in Senegal–and throughout Africa–are crisscrossed with a confluence of ideas. Drawing from a powerful legacy of women's political discourse in song and performance, women writers and national artists have used their work both to protest oppressive circumstances and to establish autonomous creative spaces of their own through modes of self-writing. A new wave of hip-hop feminist activism spearheaded by groups such as Dakar's ALIF (Liberatory Attack of the Feminist Infantry) dress their national political claims: feminist, Pan-Africanist, anti-capitalist, in the modern rhetoric of hip-hop activism and ornament them with local stylistic practices. The political claims of self-described "radical" ALIF and similar women's collectives (Farafina Moussou, GOTAL) are at once philosophically and stylistically engaged with American and French hip-hop movements and articulated in the local Wolof language as practitioners make plain the political discourses of their fans, who describe their music as "*Senerap*" (read: Senegalese rap).

Another mode of ethical music making described by young artists in Dakar, *populism*, fills the pop genre of *mbalax* pop's less-confrontational poetic and aesthetic grooves. Songs dedicated to Senegalese women, usually entitled "*Jiggen*" ("Woman"), are a Senegalese pop staple for male and female artists. As regional political and economic circumstances emerge,

[147] As I show later in this chapter, these politics also follow from Senegalese knowledge of the French Revolution, European student movements, and a longstanding African conversation with global communism.

these songs address a series of issues, each describing a contemporary problem or problems for Senegalese, African and/or Afrodiasporic women. Senegalese chanteuse Coumba Gawlo's recent "Femme Objet" informs those who misunderstand, in the language of a popular Wolof proverb, that women tie their skirts with two hands just as the men must do with their pants; only Allah, then, can judge who is the better person. "Duma femme objet," ("I will not be your [sex] object.") Gawlo sings in her video, surrounded by a chorus of women domestic workers, doctors, and schoolteachers.

For most young Senegalese women, the immediate politic of resistance diffuses amidst a complex of tangible political economies. Even as they struggle to find a secure marriage amongst a financially devastated and geographically dispersed pool of young men, they must also negotiate growing financial responsibilities toward their parents and extended family at home. To make a living in the absence of income from their brothers and male cousins, they must mediate national food prices, local markets and global trade flows to find small parcels or food items to sell profitably from tables in front of their compound thresholds. Grounded in the systems of family and community, they strive to establish the necessary personal trait of *personalité*, a crucial Senegalese cultural capital gathered through social finesse, attention to global fashion trends, generosity, service to family and Sufi group, Qu'ranic or formal education, and knowledge of *cossan*, or national culture including foodways, couture, and social values. The ability to perform nuanced social maneuvers through verbal and performative communication is central to the establishment of clout within family and community, and the ability to mobilize disparate social resources in the case of family or personal emergency.

For contemporary Senegalese women, politics manifest themselves less in a singular resistant stance of *solidarité* than in practices of communicative movement. Circumlocution, signification, metaphor, and polyvocality are the substance of everyday interactions that carry with them the materials of collectivity, trade, and survival. The everyday proverbs and griots' ritual songs and commentaries carry critical pedagogies that line Senegalese daily life. To these add the cultural assemblage that characterizes a polyvalent urban Wolof language, foodways, and clothing design. Meanwhile, a series of Senegalese women's movements for marriage law reform (including the abolition of widespread legal polygamy) and wage parity, influenced by other movements throughout the Third, Islamic, Communist and North Atlantic worlds, as well as the emerging institutionalization of longstanding vernacular microfinance, tie women's politics inextricably into global social movements. In order to detect the political weight of contemporary African women's songwriting, then, we must revisit the terms of discourses on African cosmopolitanism, globalization, world music and art in light of these complexities. In the textures of this creativity, we locate a series of struggles of a different register than that of the hip-hop *xeex* (fight or struggle). The power of Senegalese women's art requires careful contextualization from a series of critical vistas; Njaaya's work demands a revisiting of the terms that are the foundation of World Music's common sense: music, hip-hop, radical, political, tradition, African and modern. It embodies a direct historical and regional relationship to radical Négritude literatures on the Politics of Art, but also a contingent relationship to the contemporary conditions of world music fetishism, hip-hop discourses of authenticity, and local social movements in the realm of Sufism and regime change. Today, African self-writing unfolds

through a series of emergent forms, material discourses, and polyvalent performances rather than the immediate texts of revolution.

The assemblage of an emergent African body of creativity from myriad contemporary discourses has historically powered broader political change in the (post)colony. Aime Césaire, Léon Damas and Léopold Sedar Senghor articulated their political work in a series of projects that translated Surrealism's deconstruction of the sign and word into a positive Afrodiasporic rally cry for a radical decentering of the colonial project. Césaire, who calls his *Tropiques* "the death certificate of colonial literature," describes his radical aesthetic in terms of a specific conjunctural political project:

> So if Senghor and I spoke of Négritude, it was because we were in a century of exacerbated Eurocentrism, a fantastic ethnocentrism that enjoyed a guiltless conscience…Europe really had nothing on its conscience and the colonized readily accepted this vision of the world; they had interiorized the colonizer's vision of themselves. In other words, we were in a century dominated by the theory of assimilation…So Négritude was for us a way of asserting ourselves. First, the affirmation of ourselves, of the return to our own identity, of the discovery of our own selves.[148]

The Négritude writers harnessed the power of Surrealism's radical (mis)inhabitation of sign and symbol to create power-from-below in the Black Atlantic (post)colony. The overwhelming affectivity produced in this aesthetic movement lent artistic power to the Pan-African movement and the overthrow of many colonial governments (among other movements). As the Senegalese president (1960-80), Senghor translated his aesthetic work into a political program that has kept the nation relatively stable despite its poverty of resources and reinvigorated the pan-ethnic use of Wolof (instead of the Colonial French) as a *lingua franca*. Edouard Glissant's use of the novel form to posit complex performances of self and group in place of the colonial binary, in

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[148] Rowell, Interview with Aime Césaire, 992.

conversation with French poststructuralist philosophy, manifests the simultaneity of the aesthetic and the theoretical in the Caribbean contexts of cosmopolitanism, liminality, and fugitivity.

In the current conjuncture, young people negotiate a diffuse postcolonial power no longer concentrated in the court and executive, but distributed across markets, technologies and incoherent global interventions. Their struggle must move beyond rhetorics of colonial resistance to the positive establishment of space and ethical relationships that will affect postcolonial circumstances. African practices of self-writing find special fulfillment in the popular arts, where they write themselves into local, global and national discourses through an assemblage of projects. Senghor's sponsorship of the FESMAN African arts festival was a major international dimension of his program for political and cultural independence. Popular African literatures are taught in the public schools for a population of exceptionally well-read *lycee* students. One of the most prominent of these works, Miriama Bå's *So Long a Letter*, represents a host of West African women's literatures through her paced first-person account of the trials of a first wife in the course of her polygamous husband's death and burial rituals. The Senegalese popular, which in Senegal unifies fans across social class, is a space in which Islam and anthropology, dance music and experimental filmmaking find critical confluence.

Sembené's work represents such a textured aesthetic complex, in which global political struggle is parsed in a language of African signs and symbols. Njaaya's vision and Ousmane Sembené's play with the charged symbols of the *sauvage*–tribal mask, war paint, magical amulets, and animal hides–resonate with questions of Senegalese/African cultural authenticity. While these symbols have historically been projected into and stripped from French colonial subjects in Senegal according to the representational desires of the moment, these artists instead

command these objects to remake an Africanness of their own. These draw simultaneously from the spectacle and noise of a postcolonial riot and the measured continental intellectualism of the revolutionaries. The tension between an affiliation with African intellectualism and radical opposition to a series of local and global mainstreams requires a complex and shifting aesthetic comportment that can settle into neither dependency on conceptual validation by external forces nor a comfortable introspection. Njaaya and Sembené have in common the medium of "deep Wolof": proverbs, phrases and a lexicon of sociality that requires the knowledge of a *doomureewmi* ("child of this nation") for interpretation and translation. Like Sembené, Njaaya locates a hidden harmonics in seemingly dissonant arguments about the importance of maintaining pre-Islamic traditions while bringing to light the primitivist/fetishistic discourses of the postcolony. In their curation, they each use anachronistic and geographically ambiguous "African" materials to metanarrative, rather than simply fetishistic, ends. Njaaya uses some of Wolof's most powerful traditional proverbs and phrases to engage her local audiences in the process of imagining an active young Senegal.

In the clip for her 2009 hit *Social Living*, framed with a simple English-language title, Njaaya walks out onto a construction platform at the edge of Dakar and stands with her feet flat and wide apart. The Dakaroise wind whips her billowy white harem pants around her ankles. In her matching white muscle shirt, Njaaya looks unyieldingly confident. She's cut her hair from a long braided weave to an omnisex short natural (an homage to South African women's short styles) at the men's barber shop in the Medina marketplace. In her live performance of *Social Living*, she dances a Guinean *dundunba*: a Mandé dance meant to accompany the djembe.[149]

[149] See the work of Eric Charry on the djembe as a discursive object. In Eric Charry, *Mande Music: Traditional and Modern Music of the Maninka and Mandinka of Western Africa*. University of Chicago Press, 2000.

Njaaya's Africanness is the center of the world, and its ethos of social living, she declares, is the philosophy and reality by which she finds the right to instantiate her vision of self.

Njaaya must at once articulate herself to the "revolution"-hungry politics of world music and to a complex of other interventions to which she has a more personal, experiential relationship, and so the song is a complex of valences assembled into a particular intervention. The text is in Wolof but the implied audience is ambiguously broad; in fact, the song's English-language interjections are enough to appeal to Spanish and Eastern European audiences who do not hold an expectation of a French valence, while shoring up a national audience. The instrumentation and rhythms are African, but not Senegalese. Njaaya's clothes for the video, styled by her friends at *SIGIL* stylists, flow in billowy nomadic cottons. Njaaya uses the makeup techniques of young Senegalese women: Saharan kohl eyeliner, shiny pitch-black hair polish and inimitable Senegalese discotheque lipgloss. Her clothing in the video launched a fashion trend that spread from Dakar throughout West Africa and through the expat set that influences European street fashion. The settings of the video evidence the same critical aesthetic juxtaposition: the washed-out hues of mud brick are enlivened by popping bright fabrics and animated by Njaaya's soulful dance moves.

Adduna! Moo mel nii	*The world! It is like this.*
Adduna! Lii lañuy dundu	*The world! This is how we live,*
Ché liñuy dundu	*Hey! We are living this:*

Goomba temb na ci teen mussantu ko naax	*A blind man, thinking he is clever, jumps into a well*
Mooma ngay wax ngir askaan wii bayyi ko xel	*A man who cannot speak, mutters so that the people will leave their minds to him*
Katan wi jeex na waaye doyaluma	*The strength is gone but I have not had enough*
Yoor caab bi adjana bu moo neexul nga va	*One has the key to paradise, but leave it if it doesn't satisfy you*

Lii maay yottu jeex na tey ma feyul pess ma	*When I accomplish what I strive for, I'll repay you with a slap*
Duma xutcho lii ma moom	*I am not fighting over what is mine*
Donté mai borom	*It would have been under my control (already)*
Man danduleen ma, yeen ñepp nalé	*You all go away from me: everyone go over there!*
Damaay lolambé ku fii begg jaar joxe	*I am making a game of admission: before you pass me, you must pay.*
Fu maa neex faar té duma kakatar	*I support what I believe, and am not a chameleon.*
Bu nekk ak sa philosophie	*That is our philosophy*
That's our reality	*That's our reality!*
That's for you, that's for me, yeah…	*That's for you, that's for me, yeah…*

In the song, Njaaya declares that she will play a game of *lolambe*: a pastime for Senegalese kids, who run a thick line across the road that drivers must heed with a small donation, a candy, or a series of one-upping jokes. In this practice, meant to transfer power to the disempowered (the young, feminine, and small), Njaaya is standing at a crossroads of her own making. The *lolambe* that is her first solo release is meant to capture and fascinate audiences for hours who don't understand one word of her lyrics through the media of style and movement; she cements this external relation with an outro sung in world music's English, rather than the colonial French or local Wolof. She catches the foreign listener with this turn as her swathes of white fabric catch the wind and her cheekbones catch the direct Dakar sun.

Njaaya's *lolambe*–a different kind of intervention than a call for "revolution"– comes at a critical time of negotiation between the young people of Africa and a new postcolonial situation. Recent emigration trends and technology flows mean an emerging contemporary orientation an English-Speaking West. Njaaya's self-making is a calculated articulation and re-articulation of that negotiation that serves as a model for millions of young Senegalese girls and women. Cosmopolitanism, a condition of postcoloniality, here becomes a space for experimentation and

self-writing; the Senegalese cultural pulse maintains both a nuanced contemporary global context and a resonance in the heartland. In *Social Living*, Njaaya responds to the conjunctural demand for theorization and retheorization of the relationship between Senegalese young people and the colonizing force of late capitalism by way of new valences of Africanity, Senegaleseness and femininity.

The representation of "Africanity" has punctuated a long series of strategic articulations of African thought on cultural representation. The term is used by Africans to theorize negotiations with a critically-informed family of representational strategies within a global context: one, as illuminated by Mudimbe, formed both in the demands of Western modernity for a placeable "other," and as an articulation of African creativity in the context of intersecting modernities.[150] Because postcolonial resources continue to dominate the global flows of African creativity, a primary engagement with themes of Africanity is necessary for artists entering world markets; at the same time, these themes are a source of tactical play for African artists. The content, style and value of Africanity are hotly contested amongst African practitioners, down to the word and letter. Debates surrounding the political aesthetic of Africanity (and the critical specificity of its representations) fueled discussion of how the Wolof language would be used by the Senegalese in the years surrounding independence; the question how to spell certain words in the Latin orthography was the subject of national attention. Sokhna Arame Fall, a woman professor of linguistics from the prominent IFAN University in Dakar, ultimately developed a Wolof orthography at the intersection of the consideration of French and English pronunciations, the translation of Wolof temporal and spatial understandings into a system teachable to

[150] See Mudimbe, Africa.

Westerners, and the degree of inclusion of French, Arabic, and words from intersecting African languages. In the years following independence, the spelling of any particular Wolof word involved debate between Senghor, Diop and other regional intellectuals concerning its political possibilities as a lingua franca that would supplant the colonial French across the multiethnic Senegalese landscape. The language, which had already been unsystematically orthographized in *ajjami* (Wolof-language devotional poetry written in Arabic script) literature written by local Sufi leaders, and in political—and later, popular–cartoons, articulated a confluence of representational discourses.

This kind of weighted particularity is manifest in Njaaya's attention to the patterning of her stage makeup, the origin of the fabric in her costume, and the shape of her buzzcut hair. These politics are invested in her hair, her skirt, her necklace. The politics of globalization collect on her body, in her makeup. Hers is a look that is both fetishized and self-fetishizing, acknowledging and making strange again conflicting notions of Africanity. The medium for Njaaya's stylistic play with the concept draws from contemporary European fascination with the Massai—"I picture myself in Kenya or in Tanzania," she tells me as she flips through photos of herself, taken by a friend and saved on her digital camera, with facepaint and crawling around on the ground. She refers to this realm of symbolism as that of the *sauvage*: a dangerous play with primitivism aimed at the heart of the politics of African representation. At the same time, Njaaya depicts herself as an outspoken victim of sexual slavery in *Mbindan* and then represents a boldly self-empowered sexuality in other videos, mediated by her dress, her posture, her gaze.

In this tribal burlesque, Njaaya accesses the symbolic world of Fela Kuti, the Nigerian aristocrat, oppositional bandleader, and 1970s Afropop phenomenon whose play with the

exaggerated Yoruba symbology of warpaint and animal hides gained him--and his cause--massive international attention. Njaaya also cites Warhol-influenced Jamaican-American songstress Grace Jones, who in turn draws from the twin legacies of American minstrelsy and the cultivated exoticism of Josephine Baker. As she broke from the dreadlocked bohemian style of her early career, she began to sculpt her short natural hair into a pointed Zulu hairstyle. The street reaction to the style, which culminates in a ridge at her forehead that she jokes is for communication with aliens, is so intense—both admiring and disapproving--that she covers up when she walks around her neighborhood. Her manager, Cheikh Ba, often suggests changes to her hairstyle and makeup; it's a topic of discussion amongst her neighbors and video audiences alike.[151]

For a young artist, the pressures of representing Africa as a whole and integral space are great. Many in her immediate clique and within her international fans rely on her to make Africa for them. Njaaya's tactical representation through style is further challenged by the projects of producers, managers, promoters and festivals to which her touring and recording income is beholden. Each is invested in a different version of Njaaya's representation as an African woman artist, and Njaaya expresses varying comfort levels with each of these. Her work is dynamic and contingent, winding its way through hip-hop, reggae, and singer-songwriter genre showcases across Senegalese music television.

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[151] "Negrophile movements in Paris between the First and Second World Wars...seized the signs and objects of :fetishism and primitivism" in order to make them the very symbols of 'modernity' in avant-garde culture." Nuttall, in *Beautiful/Ugly*, 10.

THE AFRO COSMOPOLITANS: TOWARD AN AFRICAN RENAISSANCE

> "In the era of mondialization, my music has meaning and value if it serves to promote our culture, to participate in economic and social development of the country, or better yet, to live the African Renaissance."
>
> *--From Njaaya's media promotional card*[152]

Njaaya makes a mission of climbing to the top of this monument: one dedicated just a month ago to the "*Renaissance Africain."* Hundreds of stairsteps past the skyline of Dakar's highest neighborhood, overlooking the city and the Atlantic Ocean, we stand at the skirt of African Renaissance as it clings to this unreal body of work: a depiction of an African family pointing toward the West and, we assume, the future, rendered in the round, muscular, but referentially tangled aesthetics of the North Korean communist government who sponsored and executed this work. Colonel Mommar Ghaddafi stood on the steps to dedicate this monument just weeks ago. Here, we unwrap our schwarmas in the buffeting Saharan wind and brace ourselves against the rail. It is night, and it feels like the monument is closed, except for its glowing lights and a family of five Saudis who photograph themselves on its stairs. There are no guards in sight. Always when I am with Njaaya, I feel like we are getting away with something.

The sense of escape that surrounds my time with Njaaya draws from the relief she expresses when she temporarily abandons the thick social negotiations that accompany her work as an artist and bandleader. The scrutiny that comes with stardom is exhausting for her: band politics must be negotiated; neighborly requests for alms must be politely refused; even Njaaya's close friends snap pictures of the star performing her daily housework in her *mbindan's* mismatched clothes. This transitional time in her career and her responsibility to all her

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[152] "A l'ere de la mondialization, ma musique n'a sens et de valeur qui si elle sert a promouvoir notre culture pour participer au development economique et social du pays ou mieux encore, a la renaissance Africaine."

musicians and staff amount to a great deal of negotiation and work; Njaaya's manager, Cheikh Bâ, pitches an endless series of ideas, opportunities, and distinguishing narratives–often inspired by the techniques of other world music artists–to Njaaya's art as she carefully weighs every step of her career. Other producers, promoters and managers badger her about potential collaborations; Njaaya must weigh the demands of potential international contracts in light of her artistic freedom.

She tells me of her exhaustion with the industry as we scale the vast steps of the Monument de la Renaissance, where we climb until we are exhausted and then tuck ourselves into the darkest patch of lawn in the monument's shadow. Here, we sit for hours, talking over our ideas, our loves, and our projects. We could stay here all night unnoticed: a rare space of calm for Njaaya, who tells me it can be stressful for her to go out on her own, as her haircut makes her very recognizable. Njaaya, who uses stolen reprieves from this labor–like our walk tonight–to write dozens of songs a year, centers her lyrics on themes of entrapment, escape, and unconventional mobilities. I am again reminded of her unrecorded song, "Sama Option," which she wrote last fall amongst a series of visits with police, when a previous producer falsely accused Njaaya of abandoning their contract. Although the case was inconclusive, Njaaya understands the devastating effect of bad publicity in the Senegalese artistic economy, and sends payments to the producer even as she writes songs of protest:

Bayyima ci sama yoon	Leave me to my own way
Liggeyu ndiaye añu doom	The mother's work feeds the child
Lu moo mette mette damay agg fu ma jëm,	That which is painful I use to increase my power
Yeah! Liggeyu ndiaye añu doom	Yeah! The mother's work feeds the child
Yaa ngiy maï woote daanel	You are giving me obstacles
Té amulo ci ndam	You won't grant me my path

Yakamti wuulo lu dul ma romb	I have no time for games
Nga maï jema jamm	You will give me my peace
Fan ngay togg di wax té xamoo nii maa ngiy dem…	Where you sit and talk, you don't realize I have gone [my own way]
Té xamoo lu jëmm nganayo	You don't know my secret weapon:
Sama option	My option!
Sama sama sama option	My, my, my option! [26]

Njaaya, atop the *Monument de la Renaissance Africain*, is well aware of the resources tied into her artistic situation, finds a critical space of power in this entanglement, and is proactive in creating the most powerful art available to her within the specificities of each situated musical event. What accounts, on one hand, for her mercurial sense of style and dissonant articulations of artistic and personal identity (at one moment, she embodies a dancehall diva, and at another, a heartfelt balladeer) also accounts for the undeniably powerful and emergent self that is Njaaya's body of work, situated as it is in her zone of option.

The tension between contingency and articulation that saturates Njaaya's poetry resonates with the notion of an African Renaissance as imagined by a long genealogy of activists in Black Atlantic decolonization. The poets of Négritude, founders of Pan-Africanism, and post-Apartheid theorists alike share a rhetoric of African difference and participation: a comportment toward alterity that sacrifices nothing by way of its engagement in modern systems of globalization. In the complex of ideas that make up the notion of an African Renaissance under postcoloniality, these questions of self-articulation are perhaps the most problematic and generative.

As Njaaya and I discuss the monument in which we are ensconced, Njaaya speaks about how her schooling in French makes it feel like her mind is being colonized. She explains how her artistic work manifests the notion of, in her words, the *decolonization of mind* championed by

Fanon, Diop, and Biko in the form of artistic struggle. She thinks of herself as an intellectual: a researcher.

> *Research* gives my work its current style. Because in the beginning, I was copying the Americans--that's what I was doing. I rapped and sang in English. I did all that at the beginning. That's good, but, I'm in a situation which I, as an artist, need something.
>
> I need first to look at who *I* am: where am I?...If I'm looking at myself, I cannot leave myself. And my *self* is the African I am. So, what I can present is that which is mine.
> For me, a person cannot show anything other than what she is. No: you cannot wear my own clothes and [tell me they are yours]. Wait! You have to create something yourself, and to show me that what *you* put here is beautiful. I need things that come from *me*: that is my riches. I just want to pass my gifts all over the world. That's why, after [I toured Europe], I returned [to Dakar]: to know myself and try to establish myself here first, and then everywhere in the world.
>
> That is why I prefer to write today in Wolof. At first, I couldn't write in Wolof—I wrote in English. I only had a facility for writing in English. At first, it was difficult for me to sing in Wolof, my own language.
>
> But today, *Mashallah*, most of my writing is Wolof.[153] So for that, I'm not saying I won't write in English or French, but I know the reason. My mind and my heart have asked me to do this, and that is what I'm trying to make.

For Njaaya, decolonization of the mind involves the material dimensions of thought and creativity through the medium of voice. This comportment toward Black Consciousness unfolds within the context of modernity in order to build an alternative future; in Biko's South African model, this involves at first a psychological liberation under Apartheid and, to follow, the physical liberation of a new order of global power.[154]

After our time in the shadow of the monument, Njaaya and I will return to the artsy nonprofit bunker in the upscale Oakam neighborhood at which Njaaya is an artist-in-residence to one of many daily power outages that pull on the rhythms of life in Dakar. The power is

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[153] "By the grace of Allah."

[154] Steve Biko, *I Write What I Like.* San Francisco: Harper & Row. 1986, 103–104.

frequently out in her neighborhood, whose ministers are at odds with the president, and it seems that most of our time together here is lit by candle. Njaaya chain smokes and cooks a pot of mint *attaya* tea.[155] Here, we record our meandering conversations as Njaaya works out the dimensions of her own artistic inspiration and vision. I am staying the night at Njaaya's invitation: a gesture of friendship on both our parts. Our conversation about Njaaya's artistic identity and projects will continue, this time in earshot of my field recorder from which these notes are drawn. She speaks passionately, in tracts that she composes at the moment of articulation, and she seems to enjoy the opportunity to theorize beyond the interview format imposed by the journalistic interviews that come with her job. She is playing with ideas, working things out as she goes. In this style, she describes the importance of the artist in relationship to the notion of *xeex*.

> Africans cannot copy anyone; from that, we have more than we can have from ourselves. Our fight has to be something that is a return, to research again our own culture. To research again our traditions, to know what is the value, to sustain ourselves on that. We have to stand strong against one who exploits us. Our fight is our trust. Our trust must stay constant to the death. My trust is my music, it is my art, and even when I have some difficulty with that, hard difficulty, that is what I believe, that is my art. It is my life.
>
> We are in a time that, and I am saying in every situation in Senegal, every young person, what we have to make her know is her capacity. To make the young people know that the country really needs them. And really everybody knows that Africa is behind. And everybody know what we need is cultivation of Africa. And for that cultivation: do we need some buildings? Do we need some roads? Do we need something else?
>
> You know what we need? What we need is to know what we believe. First. And to stand for and live in what we believe.

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[155] Njaaya and I walk back in artist's residence at the Afric'Arts bunker in Oakam. A Franco-Arab hipster matron whom is somehow associated with the management of the NGO waxes about strategies for drumming up business. She tells me she is a makeup artist and then hands me her card, which features a picture of a beautiful Senegalese woman—her canvas--and suggests that I could use some help. She says she is telling the artists in residence how to be more successful with their businesses.

Njaaya's language of capacities and foundations signal her attention to processes: this focus on construction that undergird the continued rhetorics of Négritude and Pan-Africanism. Across our conversations, Njaaya returns to the resistant notion of the "xeex," or struggle, against a monolithic force, she says: "one who exploits us." For Njaaya, this discourse is always parsed in the language of cultivation, of construction and establishment. Njaaya alternates between using the term *xeex* to describe her own personal struggles in the music industry and the broader engagement with postcoloniality that is a theme for her and her peers. The question of how the complex, exploitative "one" that artists indirectly refer to when they refer to "xeex," seems to shift according to the conversational context, as does her strategy for making art in a changing set of historical circumstances.

Njaaya's explicit negotiations with the local, African and world music industries illuminate and are illuminated by the intersecting practices of other young urban musical women of the region. These artists theorize the ways in which musical community is articulated through their own changing styles. Together, these artists imagine new modes by which they and their fans relate to the bodies of the Senegalese state, global capitalism, and the World pop market. The politics of opposition, alterity and transformation that accompany this work unfold in a landscape rich with critical discourses on gender, postcoloniality, "Africanity" and aesthetics. Njaaya is proactively creates the most powerful art available to her within this situation. What may, on one hand, account for a mercurial sense of style and even painfully dissonant articulations of artistic and personal identity (selves) also accounts for the undeniably powerful and emergent whole that is Njaaya's body of work.

Njaaya positions herself as a curator at the nexus of all these discourses, all of these conflicting subjectivities, under the rubric of Africanity, a space of conceptual generation by which ideas become manifest in materiality through affective processes:

> Africanity is something we can touch, like materials. Africanity is also something that is immaterial. The immaterial is in a person: *Chez L'Africain* (the African house). You don't need to show that you are an African in order to show your Africanity. It's in your mind. When we talk about Africanity, in a person—for me—it's another African [who recognizes that] first. From that perspective, I can say that Africanity is there. It's an Africanity no one can touch, because it's in your mind. You show up, and they know you are African, maybe by your skin, and maybe in the way you think, and maybe the way you walk.
>
> And now, the rest is the Africanity that is *material*. Do you understand? Perhaps, an Africanity that is in the clothes that [Dakar independent design house] SIGIL makes: Africanity which has a feel of Africanity, do you understand? There are many here people who are in the domain of art, the domain of everything, Africanity is—how does one say —we can tell that it is in a person, it's immaterial, and we, in turn, materialize it.[156]
>
> It is pushed out of you. And that is songs you listen to, and that is…the way you walk, physicality, or mentality, and after, Africanity is wide open. Africanity comes first from the African.

Njaaya's description of the affective process of self-articulation is clarified through her description of the creative process: from the notion of the artistic self in ethical resonance with other Africans, through the medium of Africanity, and into the realm of emergent creative infrastructure as posited into the global context. This positionality between critical concepts of Africanness extends to the relationship of her work to that of other artists she admires, all loosely affiliated under the rubric of "world music." This includes classic world reggae artists like Lucky Dube, Anjelique Kidjo, and Tracey Chapman, but also regional ones like Yande Codou Sene and

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[156] Njaaya's characterization of musical affect resonates with the way in which John Coltrane describes the radical interventionist potential of embodied music making :"….we must make an effort to try and make it better. So it's the same socially, musically, politically, and in any department of our lives…I think music is an instrument. It can create the initial thought patterns that can change the thinking of people. 156 Charles H Rowell, "An Interview with Aimé Césaire." *Callaloo* 31.4 (2008): 989-997, 992.

Daara J. These artists, she says, can "help her with her vision" while ultra-feminine Senegalese *mbalax* fusion-pop stars including Vivanne N'Dour and Oumou Sow, she says, cannot. In this nexus of creative images, Njaaya holds her own with a series of projects, defined both toward an emerging global vision and against the specificity of localisms.

Under the Monument de Renaissance Africain, Njaaya's loose clothing is blowing in the high coastal wind. Njaaya tells me that she appreciates the monument, and I look at her with disbelief. It is not until months later that I realize that the vision of an African Renaissance, for all its political imperfection–the depiction of a barely-clothed African woman in a Muslim society, the foreign aesthetic of Soviet public art, the patriarchal depiction of the strong man and his desperate dependents–is within the prerogative of the artists themselves. They are well aware, like Cheikh Anta Diop was, that the conversation between Africans and North Atlantic modernity–articulated in the African Renaissance–holds indispensable resources in its problematic, but loaded, cache. Njaaya's work is not to write herself out of the differential power relations of modernity altogether, but to engage and transform them to empower her own project. The process is as powerful as it is contingent, challenging, and at times, self-contradictory.

The artists of Njaaya's Dakaroise cohort engage political processes of self-articulation in a series of discursive and aesthetic registers; the critical relationship between agency and voice is theorized across historical and contemporary discourses on style. Njaaya frames these questions variously: Francophone notions of *puissance*, technique, and force; the Senegalese idea of *saligne saligne* (loosely, refinement in style); the Islamic concept of *batin*, or the practice of esoteric knowledge. Articulated together, these elements constitute a body of work: a material infrastructure in which the Njaaya's *xeex* is staged. Njaaya theorizes the relationship between the

immaterial dimension of Africanity and its material expression in tandem with the tenents of Sufi Islam, which mine the relationship between *batin* and its external, material realization, or *zahir*.

> *Zahir* is something which, if someone doesn't have it, they will be so tired. There are some people who have nothing of that.[157] But they have *batin*, they *gemm-gemm* [truly believe]. So they live. That is *batin*.
>
> Because that is what you feel—if you emanate it, people will feel the force. It's never treachery. It's not fake; it's true. By force, it will go out and touch other people. *Mame Diarra*, we know what makes the world turn [what is going on]. Everybody [in Senegal] knows what this philosophy is about. Specifically, if I don't know everything completely, I know something about it (and can learn). You see, everybody has her life. Do you understand? For an artist herself–*see Mame Diarra?*–for a real artist, everything she writes or she sings is her life.
>
> I have written many songs which, when I wrote them, that wasn't my life. But afterward, it came to be.
>
> [She says in English…"You know what I'm saying?"]
>
> I wrote some songs that, when I wrote them, were fictional stories about other people. I knew from experience that their lives were like that, but then afterward, this thing I wrote, I'm living it!
>
> [In Wolofized French, she says, "Est-ce que comprendre-nga?"]
>
> Everyone, what she writes–I'm talking about the real artist—what she writes, she will experience, even if it's not her own life. If another person lives it, she's going to live it, too, because: an artist, what is in her heart, that's what we need from her. For her message to pass, she must touch people.[158] Voila. That's what we need from the artists, but there are so many artists. What I can say: that artists cannot say things she doesn't live. You are me, I am you, we are them, and we are the world.
>
> "*Life bii benn life*." (This life is one). But in that one life, everybody has her own life. That is how the world turns.

Njaaya's option, which she calls for in the song transcribed above, resonates with the genealogy of Black nationalist projects that involve the positing of strategic essentialisms by which colonial

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[157] *Zahir*: [Arabic: loosely, the material or manifest]

[158] "Est-ce que comprendre-nga lu ma la waax?"

(and postcolonial) groups claim the political ground of subjectivity, a strategy that undergirded Pan-Africanism.[159]

The work of Senegalese philosopher and activist Diop and his peers decenters colonial thought from its dominant cultural position in order to feature a newly-imagined Africa, created by Africans themselves from within rather than configured by the imperial gaze, as the center of an emergent world order, in which alternative scientific, mathematic, linguistic and theological systems supplant those of North Atlantic Modernity. [160] Based in this and similar Afrocentric projects, the Pan-African movement worked to tactically aggregate the support necessary to assert self-governance over systems of colonial dominance. Critics have pointed out that the underlying persistence of colonial differentiation between the cultural and the political have resulted in a series of disconnections between political anticolonial movements and the aesthetic, spiritual and philosophical radicalisms from which they emerge.[161] Thus truncated in the static form of economically dependent, unstable polities, the radical decolonial political struggle emerges in the subterranean registers of cultural performance, aesthetic creativity, poetic violence and laughter, to name a few.

BARCELONA: SINGING SENEGALESE COSMOPOLITANISM ON THE WORLD STAGE

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[159] See Balibar on Spinoza, in which right and power are collapsed into the actualization of the ability to act; rights are not inborn or granted from a separate entity, but instead articulated through the material relations between bodies through affect. Balibar, *ibid*.

[160] Africa is here imagined and re-imagined by Africans in a series of strategic essentialisms, collectivities, projects, political interventions and poetic articulations rather than geographically-bound or genetic/ essential.

[161] I use Mbembe's work to imagine the positive possibilities for the creative suturing of these discourses to displace liberal rhetorics of the postcolony.

Njaaya is a vision in the wind of the Barcelona airport. She's wearing the massive, draping *chyaa* pants of the Saharan nomads–the kind that hang from waist to ankle like a gathered skirt, with two small cuffs for her feet–and an expertly-thrown scarf and muscle shirt. She sits on the curb at the end of the pickup roundabout and lights a cigarette coolly. "*Gis nga*," she says to her backup singers Khady and Fatim, gesturing at the Spaniards walking by. "*Lepp naturale, ñepp naturale*." ("See? Everything is natural. Everyone is natural.") She reverses the colonial gaze, measuring the textures of Spanish hairstyles, makeup and clothing, and she finds relief from the high tenor of Senegalese couture, creams, and coiffures in a relaxed European cultural landscape.

The midscale hotel on a calm Barcelona sidestreet has been transformed into something like a Dakar street party. Elder Senegalese drum master DouDou N'diaye Rose and DJ Didier Awadi bump elbows over the Rose family's goatskin drumheads in the lobby as the Accro-Roller Sufi roller team glide across the lounge floors and hop elevators to friend's floors. This is a polite but noisy misuse of the hotel at the expense of the Spanish government, and the group is reveling in their freedom from close-watching eyes and downtown Dakar gossip. These young African people have something most of their peers at home desire more than anything: legal European visas. Through the revolving doors of the hotel is a stream of old friends from home, many of whom survived dangerous small motorboat rides across the Mediterranean to illegal circumstances in the medieval Spanish city. All are drunk on excitement.

Njaaya spends our first night in Barcelona on the rooftop, where she and Cheikha Sigil, her stylist who has relocated to Paris, rendezvous. After a night of participating in the fun, Njaaya begins to gather her energy for the stage show scheduled for her second day in town. The

band gathers in the dining room buffet while Cheikh Ba, her manager, sits before a plate piled exclusively with various kinds of pork. As he sips his cocktail, the rest of the group, also Muslim, do their best to look away politely. I can't help but laugh at Cheikh's vision of gluttony as I walk into the room. He responds in English: "When in Spain, Mame Diarra," he says, invoking my Wolof given name, that of a pious Sufi saint. Cheikh's cosmopolitanism manifests itself in his striking personal style: fine-twisted dreadlocks, tied in a lavender head wrap, top his lanky frame, which he dresses in the latest *bobo* styles from *Sigil*–today, a tailored pinstripe denim suit, untied military jackboots, and a tight printed t-shirt.

The group is excited and hopeful, although relations with Cheikh have been strained as he dictates a host of new musical flourishes and performative elements up until the group hits the stage. Previous tours of Senegal with the group have ended in monetary disputes and subsequent personnel changes, but the general sense in Barcelona is one of perseverance and enthusiasm. Njaaya's congenial drummer, Abdu, and bassist, Modou Dieng, and I enjoy a long conversation about the African sound over lunch. They have been working with Njaaya from her first solo recordings and, despite the stresses of touring and rehearsing for years with little or no pay, plan to stick with her; they tell me that they find the experience of making arrangements for her songwriting fulfilling, and that they expect her star to rise in upcoming years.

Njaaya is herself overcome with nerves before the show and retreats into privacy throughout the day. Cheikh does his best to calm her, but she wants to be alone. When the production team begins sound check, the keyboardist and backing singer are still missing, and without Spanish cell phones, they are out of touch. Tension is high. Njaaya and the remainder of their group extend their personal microphone checks and try to buy time, and the missing

members emerge, nearly an hour after schedule. They run through a song or two and retreat to the dressing rooms to prepare and joke around as Njaaya takes over a small private closet at the end of the hall. Here, they will dress me in the designer costume of the band and badger me into taking a barrage of photos. We laugh our way through the banquet line. Next door, Njaaya worries and prepares. I see her in snippets as Cheikh Ba darts in and out of her dressing room.

Just before the performance, Njaaya emerges with her signature black-on-brown half-facepaint and a simple wrapped costume of plain black cloth, barefoot. She stays to herself as she prepares to climb the side stairs onstage, and then does so, quietly, and solo, as the stage lights illuminate the sublime cliffside of Barcelona's outdoor Greek Theatre. She takes her chair and begins to sing, supported with the light broken chords of her acoustic guitar, the strains of *Dina Mégn*, a song meant for the dozens of Senegalese in the audience who reached Europeans shores by boat for the hope of work, or by visas gained through marriage to European spouses.

As she rounds out the poetry and vocal nuance of the song and transitions to another, the group slowly joins her onstage. The crowd ebbs and flows as she paces through each of her best pieces. At times, the band's over-ambitious arrangements, encouraged by Cheikh and the keyboardist, carry themselves away from her; she asserts her voice and posits her poetry, mostly Wolof, for the crowd. In this performance, Njaaya meets the challenge to articulate her vision for a mixed audience. The audience mellows, but stays, as the group's energy hits a new register as they commence in the rhythms of "Social Living," the danciest staple of her show. As soon as the first strains of the clavier sound, a group of seven dreadlocked Accro-Rollers emerge from sidestage, draped in the patchwork denim of Dakar's *Sigil* stylists, and glide, flip and jump

across the space between performer and audience: cosmopolitans in motion. The crowd jumps to its feet.

For the purposes of engaging Spanish audiences, showcasing the group's talent, cultivating future connections and resources, and representing Njaaya's work on the international stage, the performance is a victory. The excitement amongst the group and the Senegalese in the crowd is palpable: they jump and cheer, singing along; new Spanish will post photos and videos across social media. I want to document this moment for Njaaya, to mark it with photos and celebrate it with toasts, but she will not return to the parties after the show. She remains private and returns to the hotel to spend time with her closest friends, the clothing designers for SIGIL who live just around her corner at home in Dakar. Khadija and Fatima, Njaaya's backup singers, and I head out for a drink at a pirate-themed Barcelona dance club, where the sombrero-wearing male bartenders bare their rears as they dance on the bar and offer free shots for female patrons who spank them with leather switches. I miss our Dakar ritual of post-show *attaya* and conversation.

The next morning, we head out for Sunday breakfast on the cobblestone streets of Barcelona. Like her band, Njaaya is determined to steer clear of any food that could potentially contain pork. We notice how the Spanish seem to put plates of sugar cubes or packets on every table; the plenty is overwhelming in contrast to the preciousness of food staples in Dakar. She tells me over churros, chocolate and café how difficult this trip has been for her, and how the stress of managing the band in foreign surroundings and the challenge of performing new song arrangements for the first time have made her uneasy. European producers and promoters have approached her and her management about a series of distant recording and travel possibilities;

Cheikh Ba alternates between concern with these opportunities and a territorial posture; his relations with the group and the artist are not secure, and his work with Njaaya is his sole employment. Njaaya is overwhelmed and exhausted. But what she really wants to talk about is love. Love is on her mind.

THIS FIELD WILL GROW: WRITING FUTURITY

Njaaya is the happiest I've ever seen her in this recording studio.

In the exclusive neighborhood of Oakam, diasporic Senegalese musician and producer Jean Pierre Senghor and his team are working on a compilation album for a series of Dakaroise reggae, singer-songwriter, and sample-based hip-hop artists: a loosely affiliated group whose performance of Afro-cosmopolitanism, articulated in high wrapped dreadlocks, draped clothing, and hybrid-language lyrics about poverty and hope, appeals to the tastes of European fashionistas and indie record labels. Soon, he hopes, the entire group will embark on a world tour that will decisively break these artists into the world music market. It's a common ambition for young African musical players who have the resources of studio equipment and international connections at their disposal, but its goals are vague and distant; few such projects materialize. Still, the opportunity to record a single (and often, a video) in a professional studio at no cost is guarantee enough for Dakar's struggling artists, and opportunities to travel or release a solo album through these new international contacts do sometimes arise in the shape of sponsored artist visas to Europe or the US; appearances in documentaries; and global exposure through online articles and youtube videos.

Today, Njaaya chooses to record *Dana Mégn*, a Wolof-language song for young men who are considering the dangers of migration for the distant promise of work abroad. As Senegalese

national politics threaten to break down in the Wake of Abdoulaye Wade's aggressive attempt to retain hostile control of the presidency, Njaaya speaks to that context as well as one abroad. Above all, the song is personal for her as she has ambivalence about moving to Spain. The answer, she tells us, is in the cultivation of an Africa that explains its past and present by way of the future rather than a nation mired in the historicity of victimhood.

Dana Mégn, dana mégn, dana mégn	*It will grow, it will grow, it will grow*
Toll wii dana mégn	*This field here will grow*
Dana Mégn, dana mégn, dana mégn	*It will grow, it will grow, it will grow*
Toll wii dana mégn	*This field here will grow*
Dañuy tedd di nelaw ba sene loss tokki.	*They lay to sleep until their necks are tired.*
Ñu jog ku leen ni ben ñu dal ca kow	*They rise only to attack the one who tries to tell them*
Ay tapalekat lañu jemuñu leen	*There are deceivers who don't try anything*
Mol ba takk na mbalam jubul lii—fan?	*The fisherman ties his net (and casts it) where?*
Wuuti reewume taax yu kaweya ndax né	*Another country with high buildings because he says.*
Né naa guedj gi dafa sambaraa	*He says, "The ocean is empty."*
Jank jaa pesse na boppam	*The maiden weighs herself*
Gis nee diis na gann, bon	*She sees that she is heavy, then*
Sekatu ko boromi corno	*She does not deal with [the lover] who brings troubles*
Boromi million lay joxanté loxo	*She takes the hand of the one who has riches*
Su ko deffay reew mi jem kanaam!!!	*When she does this, our country advances.*
Dana Mégn, dana mégn, dana mégn	*It will grow, it will grow, it will grow*
Toll wii dana mégn	*This field here will grow*
Dana Mégn, dana mégn, dana mégn	*It will grow, it will grow, it will grow*
Toll wii dana mégn	*This field here will grow*
Tapalékat yaa ngay daw di laay	*Deceiver, you will run to give excuses*
Bagnekat yaa ngay tokk dii bey	*Fighter, you will stay and work in the field*
Dimbaléñu mame yalla maay ñu ndox	*Help us, God, to give use water*
Suñu dundé dana ñew la fey ndox	*Our life will come to repay you in more water*
Jangleen yassar gi	*Learn this prayer for water*
Guenee daba yi	*Take down this hoe*
Talal loxo yi	*Start these hands [working]*

Bu sobee borom bi	*By the will of the master [Allah]*
Danañu taxawoo ngir	*He will stand us up for*
Barkélu ci xewelu fajjar gi!	*Blessings for peace first thing in the morning!*
Dana Mégn, dana mégn, dana mégn	*It will grow, it will grow, it will grow*
Toll wii dana mégn	*This field here will grow*
Dana Mégn, dana mégn, dana mégn	*It will grow, it will grow, it will grow*
Toll wii dana mégn	*This field here will grow*

As I watch her in the studio, I am awed by how her technique has grown in the year and a half I've witnessed her work. In the course of a few overlapping first cuts, Njaaya lays in the verses and choruses that are the song's basic track. Over the next two days, she will improvise subsequent layerings to the warp and woof of the production: harmonizations, ululations, multi-tracked chants and repetitions. Njaaya draws herself into the textures of the music, tracing the recording again and again with layers of vocal tracks, each different. With each loop, she reinvents the song. The recording gives the sense of a circle of innumerable Njaayas harmonizing with each other, each different, each an improvisation on the work of the last. During Njaaya's cigarette breaks, the producers, trained in the independent studios of Brazil and Europe deftly round out the sound on the clavier. The song has been transposed from Njaaya's acoustic-guitar singer/songwriter styling into a slow reggae arrangement with synth strings, a sparse half-drop rhythm track, and a Jamaican dub-inflected slap bass. Njaaya's backing band and singers are not invited to the sessions.

I am glad I asked for a copy of the song file, a habit I got into early on in my fieldwork as I witnessed tracks become missing in the politics of the studio and instability of the CD format. Mine may be the only existing copy of the song, a fleeting chronicle of a career of creativity, sacrifice and regeneration.

As I write this segment of the chapter, I long to speak with Njaaya; I have been calling her for months and have been unable to reach her, her manager, Cheikh Ba, or any of the Accro-Rollers for whom I have outdated phone numbers. In transcribing an interview, I hear Njaaya interrupt our recorded conversation to greet a friend, who was calling to get the number of Coura, the woman I met with Njaaya on the beach that first night at Palm d'Or. When I reach Coura, she tells me that Njaaya's been living in France since June. She contacts Njaaya on my behalf, in order to protect Njaaya's privacy (she gets many calls a day from industry people and fans). Shortly, she responds that Njaaya is eagerly awaiting our call. She was marooned by a shady French music tour manager in the midst of a poorly-organized European tour and found her friends from *Sigil* working and selling their clothing designs in rural France. Here, she became pregnant and makes her announcement in controlled, but joyous, tones: "Man, maa jongama leggey," she says: "These days, I am a voluptuous woman." In Wolof custom, pregnancy is never announced directly.

She has no legal residence papers for France, she tells me, so she will stay quietly in the province with the baby's Senegalese father until after he or she is born. The scrutiny of single motherhood and return from Europe (usually associated with the communal distribution of money and gifts acquired abroad) will wait until she has the support and stability she needs. She considers herself in exile, across the tricky Mediterranean, over the Moroccan landscape and the Mauritanian Sahara from her Dakar home. "I've never missed Senegal more," she says. "Than I do now. I always knew that *Dana Mégn* needed one more verse; now I have the understanding I needed to write it." She pauses.

“Mame Diarra,” she says, calling me by my Senegalese name and then continuing in her self-taught English: “I miss my public in Senegal. I need my public.”

Through all of Njaaya’s living, art remains the singular focus. Njaaya’s priorities as a creative person are foundational, she does not lose sight of her vision. Even in the everyday specificity of carrying a child, Njaaya takes a longview of what this life means. She carries her commitment to the African creative body; as her creative work reflects self in transformation. Njaaya’s work establishes and reestablishes territories of independence, each contingent upon the circumstances of the creative moment. This project of space-making through the performative event indicates the kind of thinking by which young people in Dakar contribute to the establishment of Dakar’s body in sound. Time and distance from her space of inspiration do nothing to distract Njaaya from her artistic vision nor her investment in her own representation. She has seen my translations of her songs and is working to send me a slate of corrections, she says. There is plenty of work left to be done

CHAPTER 3: SOUKEYE: THE VOICE OF CULTURE IN THE URBAN VILLAGE

In numerous tales,
woman is depicted as the one who possessed the fire.
Only she knew how to make fire.
She kept it in diverse places:
at the end of the stick she used to dig the ground with,
for example.
In her nails or her fingers.

Reality is delicate.
My irreality and imagination
are otherwise dull.[162]

–Trinh T. Minh-Ha, Reasemblage

Soukeye is singing as she steps in the fire.

At her mother's home in the Sine-Saloum Delta, Soukeye always seems to smell of fresh smoke; tonight, it licks the legs of her skirt and touches her toes. In the fifteen seconds in which she is entagled in it, I swear she is aflame. She picks burning coals out of the fire with her bare fingers, and then reduces the heat to the right level for slow-cooking the dinner broth. Here in Ndagane, the fire opens up to an unruly pit of jagged coal and found brush, and it lights a landscape largely without electricity in the national power crisis. The women here know how to control the fire for various purposes: for broth-making, rice-cooking and roasting in a large iron pot; for warmth and light on the cool *harmattan* nights of spring; to light community gatherings and rituals when the village power goes out. In tonight's stifling summer heat and humidity, the hearth is just one of a spectrum of intensities. It is a medium of illumination, of the

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[162] Trinh, *Reassemblage*, 1981

transformation of textures and flavors, of gathering for the family at the end of the day. It is accompanied by the voices of *gewels*, the Senegambian griots whose traditions of style and eloquence are the substance of regional culture.

Soukeye Dieng's voice is plaited, folded, heavy with harmonics, pulled into long phrases and then pushed into rapid-fire utterances. At once, its breath catches all of Soukeye's throat and lungs, but then shifts to issue from her forehead when sharpness serves it best. This voice is loud and there is a lot of it, and when Soukeye lets it loose, all within earshot become wrapped in its exquisite textures. Soukeye's voice is her companion and her family's sustenance: it comes in excess. Soukeye is singing a praise song tonight–one of her favorites:

Bishmilla.	With the blessings of Allah
Maa ngiy door-ee	I am determined
di wooy Maam Fallou 'lahi	to sing of blessed ancestor Fallou [Mbacké]
Fallou 'lahi Fallou 'lahi Fallou 'lahi	Blessed Fallou, blessed Fallou, blessed Fallou
Maam Fallou 'lahi	Blessed ancestor Fallou [Mbacké]
Wooy naa la, kañj naa la, Maam Fallou	I sing of you, believe in you, ancestor Fallou
Maam Fallou 'lahi	Blessed ancestor Fallou [Mbacké] [2]

These heartfelt lines, drawn from the verses of praise that have anchored the regional griots' songs from ancient times, ground what is for Soukeye a lifelong exercise in vocal improvisation: a sinuous sonic path that runs through her daily life. This version is a Sufi prayer to saint Serigne Fallou Mbacké, whose gentle demeanor and spiritual strength appeal to young people of Soukeye's generation. She wanders through the lines of the song with the same confidence with which she negotiates the fire, and her arrangement slips beyond her family hearth and into the still Delta night. The village is pitch-dark except for a series of such fires, a full spectrum of

stars, and the occasional LED glow of a cell phone or flashlight: an epidemic of national power outages has rendered the Senegalese countryside otherwise dark. A meandering song in the dark village night: a hearth reignited.

For Soukeye, tonight is a rare break from nightly gigs as a ritual praise singer and nightclub chanteuse; this voice is her livelihood, and it leads her extended family to sustenance. The young praise singer–a proud member of a storied griot family of the Serer peoples–brings in enough money through a combination of vocal talent and pure hustle to support her entire family of nine. She must use her voice to negotiate the poverty whose grip on the Senegalese economic landscape has increased steadily in the wake of colonial disenfranchisement, postcolonial mismanagement, and environmental drought and famine. Soukeye and her family of gewels, like the rest of the region's various ethnic griots, trade in the currency of the voice: the most powerful medium of social capital in the region. As such, she is one of about a million Senegalese griots–roughly ten percent of the national population–who were born to wield the power of musical eloquence. Each of these belongs to the praise-singing caste of their particular ethnic group: the Wolof, Lebú and Serer *gewels*; the Mandé *jélis,* the Hal-Pulaar *gawlos,* or any of the musical Laobé people. Like her mother and father before her and all of her extended family, Soukeye possesses a voice meant to make things happen. I imagine half a million other Senegalese women-griotte peers to Soukeye–each singing at her hearth or on her stage or on her commute, enveloping all the region in a phonographic stratum: the sound of culture.

SAFF-SAFFAL: THE SPICE OF LIFE

Tonight is a quiet one for Ndagane, and Soukeye has the time to sing and cook a slow meal as her mother and children look on. Her work as a local ritual singer and nightclub

chanteuse means that her voice is more often wrapped up in the textures of a baby-naming ceremony or bouncing from the cement walls of the local tourist discotheque. But tonight, she will spend extra time slow-cooking the regional favorite of *domoda*; peanut sauce and sheep's pluck over rice. In this village and throughout Senegal, cooking is the substance of daily life, and of the regional culture the Senegalese call *cossan.* In matters of *cossan*, the language of culture is grounded in the aesthetics of nourishment and taste. A good party or a nice new dress is called *saff-saffal* (possessing the spice of life, as does a fire: *safara*), and a buoyant personality is said to be *neex,* or tasty. In Senegal, gewels are said to invest in the most exquisite wardrobes, to throw the best parties, to prepare the richest and most flavorful meals. As an aesthetic medium of cultural intensity, the Senegalese voice is as fundamental to social nourishment as food is to the belly: the two so often accompany each other that they share a language.

Last night, Soukeye was the star of the midnight discotheque in the little tourist town in the Delta. Dressed in custom-tailored gold lamé robes, Soukeye's eyes shone bright with glitter paint against her dark brown skin. She stood at the front of her stage, in the spotlight, and commanded her band of drummers and a *kora* player through three hours of song and dance. As a small crowd of local friends, tourists, and *sai-sai* hustlers danced and sang along, Soukeye wound her voice around the contours of the night. She sang songs of love collected from her own deep Serer and Wolof traditions, from the poetic Senghor era, from current radio, and from her own family's cadre with an occasional improvised verse about a friend or patron in the house. As she sang, her pocket was filled with small bills: patronage from friends whose praises have been sung and tips from tourists who like the music.[163]

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[163] For a nuanced account of the political economy of women's ritual events ans assosicated aesthetic practices, see Beth Ann Buggenhagen's comprehensive study, *Muslim Families in Global Senegal: Money Takes Care of Shame.* Indiana University Press, 2012.

Tonight, Soukeye tells me she is exhausted. This morning, she worked her way through the village, distributing last night's earnings into a constellation of palms: a substantial silver *temeer*–about a dollar–the fish merchant, with whom Soukeye negotiated for the best assortment of cuts for lunchtime *ceebü jën*; packets of tea, mint and sugar for the teens of the family; a scratch-off card of phone credit that would give her a half-hour's credit–long enough to call her cousins for in Dakar for news. Throughout her family compound and immediate neighborhood, she passed small change to those who, aware of her recent income, inquire after her success; in Senegalese custom, they ask for such favors upfront. When a friend stops her on the street to ask for a dollar's worth of phone credit with the usual Senegalese assertiveness, *"Buy me credit, Soukeye!"*, she must pass a coin to her or risk losing face. The children wait at the threshold of the boutique for Soukeye when they see her coming and demand candies: *"Give us sugar!"* She hands out parcels of powdered milk and *bissap* to familiar elders she passes. In her enactment of *teranga* (generosity), Soukeye strengthens her relationships through the medium of *fula ak fayda* (custom and duty) around which Senegalese culture is based, even as she finds a little wiggle room by which she can nourish her own needs.[164]

Most of her earnings go to small, often inexact or unspecified debts she or her family have incurred throughout the week: the owner of the boutique on the corner keeps a running tab for phone credit, candles, and ten-cent parcels of detergent; the family next door loaned a small bag of rice; the local Sufi holy *marabout* collects alms for his devotees' upcoming pilgrimage. With the few small bills she has left, Soukeye slips in to visit friend at the beauty shop and walks away with a few dollars' worth of pressed powder and hair extensions. She has another event on

[164] Pay for musicians/vocalists is like a tithe in Senegal that society demands of you in order to keep culture flowing; this process illuminates a host of anthropological literature on value.

Friday and needs to look her best for the big party in Dakar. Soukeye's monetary earnings are whittled to nothing by day's end, but she has replenished her standing in the community and commanded the power to borrow again–or to less-directly cultivate her material needs as they arise in the future. The ability to do so indicates a true Senegalese *personalité*–a social position based more on the ability, through the force of one's personality, to mobilize resources than material wealth. The griots trade in such possibility and rarely manage to accumulate substantial private wealth. When any of the families in her network plan a ritual, they will ask her to emcee the activities; her generosity will be rewarded. If she happens to earn well at such an event, she travels to Dakar for a week, until the community has set their sights on other fortunes.

Back at her hearth, Soukeye takes a deep breath and stirs tonight's meal. As the eldest daughter of her family, she supports the entire household with her voice and with her relentless domestic labor. Even at home, she is the center of attention: the younger members admire her personal style and her musical talent; the elders rely on her to keep rice in the pot and to handle family financial crises. The struggle to survive in the stifling Senegalese economy is a ceaseless grind for Soukeye and her community, and with little sleep after last night's long performance and a day spent bargaining for groceries with her small earnings, Soukeye is exhausted. She is responsible for the daily rice of both her immediate household and her mother's contribution–measured in material income as well as shared labor–to the larger family compound of four grass-roof huts and a two-room mud-brick house. In the candid conversations we have during my visit, she tells me how the responsibility wears on her. She mourns a friend who has died in a car accident; she is arguing with her boyfriend; she wants to have her short hair woven with long,

loose curls before tomorrow night's gig. At the age of 25, Soukeye longs for a little air of her own.

In the small square hut that is her bedroom lives Soukeye's aging and gentle mother Dia, a former singer with the national theater whose health is exhausted in a region with a life expectancy of 57 years. She celebrated the heyday of her career in Dakar during the hopeful era of Senghor, in which the cultural robustness of the big city offered all the possibilities of independence. As the city's business center grew, however, the family's compound on the edge of the urban plateau was (like their neighbors') relocated by decree to the vast, struggling ghetto of Guediawaye, where massive urban in-migration, due to the vast countryside drought and famine of the early 1980s, made resources scarce. The economic hopes of Senghorian independence failed to materialize. Still, Dia and her brothers and sisters were able to sing for their sustenance. Thirty years later, the droughts continue and the griots seek performance opportunities as the incomes of would-be patrons and government sponsorships dwindle. Sometimes, they sing for tourists.

Soukeye's teenage brother and sister Fallou and Fatim, and her cousin Ndeye, are her generational peers in the household. Between them, they parent four children under the age of ten. Soukeye's spangled performance clothes, collected over years of ritual work and club appearances, are piled in the corners to form pillows for any of the nine heads who will rest here at night as the fieldmice patter in the closet. Soukeye is mother to three inquisitive young boys: Mas, Gora, and little Samba, my favorite, who, at the age of four-and-a-half, manages to issue comedic pratfalls, pithy comments, and sarcastic surprise faces from his much younger, asthmatic body. Samba and I stick together when I am visiting Ndagane-Samb with this family of

gewels: the praise singers, bards and drummers of the coastal Serer peoples six hours south of Dakar. He sits on my lap and listens to his mother sing.

INTERLOCUTING AFRICAN MODERNITY

The quality of the voice, the strength of the character of its bearer, the eloquence that shapes its deployment: the gewels theorize these media to shape a Senegalese economy of vocalization. The voice of culture is instantiated in the gewel, they tell me, and is passed from to the child through her mother's milk: it nourishes and empowers. In its strains are critical understandings of cultural materiality without which young women like Soukeye would otherwise be destitute. Although male instrumentalists and pop singers have, from earliest encounters, dominated global representations of West Africa, women artists are omnipresent in the music of Senegambia. Senegalese national arts festivals recognize and often feature the special importance of women griottes to regional culture, and women vocalists are both omnipresent in the ritual realm, and on African popular radio and television.[165] The voices of tens of thousands of women griottes are part of the cultural meshwork of the city; they join one another in the *body in sound* that is contemporary Senegal, materialized in the urban center of Dakar.

As this project mines the threads of African possibility and futurity in a landscape of lack, it attends to what Mbmebe calls the "thickness by which the African presence is made": the subtler textures of life amongst parasitic geoeconomic circumstances.[166] In this study of young women's vocal practices in contemporary Dakar, I argue that sound works as the fundamental

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[165] Youssou N'Dour, the region's most nightly recognized singer, draws his own style from that of his mother, a *griotte* of the Hal-Pulaar people (called a *gawlo*).

[166] Achille Mbembe, *ibid*.

medium of living in the modern West African metropolis. My work with Soukeye in the double fieldsites of her Serer village of Ndangane and the streets of Dakar illustrates the ways in which the contemporary urban political economy of sound draws from a longstanding regional sonic consciousness: a series of critical discourses by which the Senegalese theorize sound, aesthetics, and the materiality of eloquent vocalization. As it pulls together rural and nomadic peoples, and is thickened with a host of local and global media practices, contemporary Dakar turns on a subaltern political economy of sound, an important register for contemporary anthropological work.

> The rich literature on inscription combined with the idea of the soundscape and with patterns of globalization—the distribution of particular sounds, their audibility, and their value—reminds us that configurations of sound have political implications for a public, which is always a cosmopolitan listening public.[...] Were anthropology to consider its critical deafness to its own use of sound technology, to processes of acoustic mediation, and to the potential of sounded aesthetics as ethnography, anthropology might more productively engage with the artifacts of its own early history, and ethnographers could bring aural sensibilities to the worlds inhabited by the people with whom they work and consider those sounded worlds as more than performance genres to be extracted from their contexts.[167]

As the griotte retains a special place in the social life of Senegal, so do voice and sound remain critical registers of Senegalese culture. In order to examine the relationship between acoustic technologies and the Senegalese struggle to survive amidst crippling postcolonial economic circumstances, I follow the critical voice of the woman griotte, central to Dakar's body in sound. In its strains, Senegalese women locate hidden powers by which they negotiate their socioeconomic circumstances. The griotte's voice is neither a relic of the past nor a quick stylistic paper over the problems of the modern present. It is intersticial: a medium by which the

[167] David W. Samuels, Louise Meintjes, Ana Maria Ochoa, and Thomas Porcello. "Soundscapes: toward a sounded anthropology." Annual Review of Anthropology 39 (2010): 329-345., 339.

women of Senegal and their communities cultivate a *present* livelihood that supersedes the notions of a static customary past and the pressing future of globalization.[168] It is fundamental to the life-cycle rituals by which Senegalese culture survives and thrives, and to processes of national self-representation by which the women of Senegal negotiate global exchange.

Rather than a closed cultural ecosystem that is destabilized by encounters with other ethnicities, nationalities, and worldviews, the Senegalese village articulates the complex circuits by which the cultures of the semi-nomadic people of the Senegambia region have always moved, from the itinerant herdsman, to the Serer fish merchant stationed in the deep savannah, to the pilgrimages of urban youth to Holy Sufi sites int he desert. Charles Piot describes the spatial and temporal overlapping of the village and the metropolis in his work on contemporary Togo, in which the sites of village and the city "are themselves intimately connected, in which a string pulled here produces and unraveling there–in which a panic in the village affects life in the city, just as a death in the city will occasion a return to the village."[169] The need for a more comprehensive anthropological model of the Senegalese cultural economy is even more stark in the age of the African metropolis. In the thirty years since Trinh Minh-Ha documented the distinct ethnic characters of Senegalese rural life, a series of droughts, famine, and economic abandonment by the European economy, as well as the more recent decline in tourism, have driven most rural Senegalese to Dakar's city streets for swaths of the year, poised in constant commute. But even as the ancient semi-nomadic practices of the region–still maintained by Peul herdsmen, Wolof traders, and Laobé craftspeople among others–are transposed into

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[168] Piot asks: "But whither Anthropology in the face of culture's sacrifice?" In Charles Piot, *Nostalgia for the Future*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 2010, 169.

[169] John M. Chernoff, *Hustling is not Stealing: Stories of an African Bar Girl*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 2003, 16.

contemporary migrational grooves, the centrality of women's voices remains intact in Senegalese culture. Here, the musical voice is the primary medium by which urban and rural sites activate *each other*. In the slippage between their different registers of engagement with modernity, ethnicity is always articulated in between. It is as strategic in the rural homeland as it is in the urban center.

A generation ago, when the villages had the natural resources to maintain a different sort of ecosystem, the women of rural Senegal were thinking critically about questions of representation. When ethnomusicologist Trinh Minh-Ha filmed her 1981 ethnographic film on the lives of Senegalese women, *Reassemblage*, the Senegalese population was still largely oriented to the village. Even as Trinh maps the classic colonial trope onto her photographic wanderings–village women bathing in the stream–she takes note of the women's critical engagement with her representational craft: the women invite Trinh to bring her cameras closer; they play to her lens. Here, she contrasts local ways of knowing with the subjects of conventional empiricism: statistics, kinship grids, and historical genealogies.

As she pulls focus from the village square to the women's hearth, Trinh sounds a new practice of polyvocal, or multiply-voiced, representation through ethnographic practice, and sets her empirical tone to local ways of knowing. As she displaces totalizing ethnographic truth for a complex of women's self-representations, Trinh suggests that worldviews, situated knowledges, and ontological understandings–ways of theorizing culture Mundimbe calls African *gnosis*–are multiply-placed. In contrast to the centrality of the "anthropological fact," she locates a shared feminine knowing that, like the embers of fire, holds the potential for reignition and regeneration. The figure of the woman nursing the child at the breast is the visual foundation of

Trinh's film as she locates the substance of Senegalese sociality in the intimacy of the hearth. Here, she amplifies women's voices as they carry a mother's coos, a sister's gossip, a co-wife's negotiation of the tasks of cooking and work. In her visit to the Serer Delta, Trinh records the voice of a woman named Djumalog, an elder from the village of Boucoum who peers past her conversation partner and into the camera, smiling as she speaks. Lingering on the sound of Djumalog's voice, Trinh leaves the language untranslated, and foregrounds the sound of the voice as it buoys the rhythms of mortar against pestle and laughter.

Media Anthropology, concerned with the sensory registers of communication and cultural representation, tells us something important about how the qualities of sound and voicing so important to the Senegalese villagers matter to African life. Following Trinh's work on the critical nature of Senegalese women's cosmology, careful ethnographic attention to the world of sound reveals the ways in which the medium of voice achieves both immediate and occult political ends. Djumalong commands the conversation with her peers, but she also commands Trinh's camera and the documentary audience's gaze. She displaces the participant/observer ethnographic hierarchy for a polyvocal process Trinh calls "speaking nearby." These dual politics of communication–a conversation between community members at the hearth, and a strategic self-representation directed toward the outside observer–characterize the complex of mediation at work in everyday Senegalese life. I want to keep in focus the ways in which the work of Senegalese women–like all communication–is multiply-situated. Only with that perspective can the work of traditional practitioners like Soukeye—who we understand to be both speaking within the local circuits of village ritual and those of urban redistribution, national politics, and global capital–be represented in its fullness. Most importantly, Soukeye, like Djumalong before

her, speaks of and to herself as she uses her performative situation to configure and articulate her own being: equipped with the prozed resource of voice ("baht"), the griotte rarely neglects to sing her self beside her patron.[170]

Media anthropology calls attention to the ways in which global practitioners conceptualize communicative processes involving affect, representation, and technology. Soukeye Dieng's vocal work illuminates the continuities between indigenous sounding practices and the cosmopolitan styles of Dakar. Soukeye maintains the integrity of Senegalese ritual practices while also cultivating the resources associated with the external representation of her self and community to others. In her village, she is a proud member of an extended griot's family; to the people of Dakar, she is a bearer of sought-after Serer "deep" ritual practices; to the tourists, she is an object of admiration and desire. Back home in Ndangane, Soukeye is a fashionable, working city girl.

Finally, media anthropology focuses on the relationship of regional, ethnic, national and specific cultural circumstances to the contemporary global media landscape. Thousands of Senegalese griots, male and female, dominate–alongside the Mandinke jelis of Mali–the regional popular music and video scene. They are the presidential spokespeople, talk television hosts, and news reporters that are the local media. As interlocutors, they often hold positions as translators and language teachers. They survey and conduct the cultural programs of visiting NGOs, expats, and embassy functions. As Djumalong engages Trinh's camera and microphone, so does Soukeye engage this ethnographic work.

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[170] A Pierciean analysis might be a fruitful route for further analysis of the griotte's song.

The circumstances of African urban modernity and the culture of the village remake each other in the present tense. In this chapter, I offer the story of Soukeye's struggle and creativity as an alternative to the representational poverty by which African life is discursively distorted in tropes of loss: either a myopic vision of dwindling life in the ethnic village, or a bird's-eye view of the failed global metropolis. With Soukeye and her migrant family, I linger in the vocal media by which either of these imaginaries is lived and reworked by Senegalese women as they maintain a robust cultural life that belies postcolonial economic circumstances. In the work of Soukeye and her *griotte* peers, I record a singular national soundscape, cast in women's resounding voices, that promises the persistence of a robust Senegalese life. At the same time, I call attention to the relentless struggle for survival that threatens to exhaust the Senegalese livelihood. Soukeye and her family live in the tension between postcolonial exhaustion and the hope for a "new possible world."[171] I follow Soukeye, the griotte, as she interlocutes the world of the village and that of the city, and trace her voice as it sounds the continuity between ethnic custom and an emergent Senegalese futurity.

THE VOICE THAT MATTERS

Ndagane-Samb is a knot of a town, a mound of fine shifting sand surrounded by the waters of the Sine-Saloum Delta, that doubles as a Serer homeland and a struggling coastal tourist settlement. For two decades, a dwindling series of Francophone tourist camps and summer homes languish in the heavy, increasing heat. A flailing transportation infrastructure has decimated any hope for the regular influx of casual tour bus euros. Ndangane's sister city, Mar Lodj, is a boat ride away, across the marsh full with abundant fish and clinging oysters. Without

[171] See Arturo Escobar, *Encountering Development: The Making and Unmaking of the Third World (New in Paper).* Princeton University Press, 2011.

electricity or running water, the little island, after a brief encounter with French Catholic missionaries in the 19th Century, keeps to itself; without a club or restaurant, it cannot sustain more than a handful of short-term visitors. There is a single Peace Corps volunteer on the island, a calmer echo to the Ndagane shore, where a handful of French surfers, anglers, and visitors to one of the two dozen vacation rentals in town find drum teachers, domestic workers, and lovers amongst the local population. These *toubabs* spend small money at the fish market, patronize boutiques and nightclubs, hire drivers for local excursions to Dakar and beaches, and employ builders to augment their elaborate, if largely abandoned, vacation homes.

Myopic representations of Serer tradition, ethnicity, and the village are easy to achieve for the purposes of tourism and ethnography, and the textures of ethnic custom hold a special cache for culture industries (tourism, record labels, NGOs) invested in the persistence of a self-contained alternative to capitalist modernity. For the Serer, the talking drums and the trees from which they are carved hold special ritual powers: when sounded by a knowledgable gewel, they stir the social world around them. The Serer people tie their chests and arms with talismans made, for a fee, by powerful local spiritual mediums whose work is worth a premium to Dakar residents who seek effective intervention. Even as some Serer maintain vestiges of the Catholicism brought by French missionaries and most claim an ever-strengthening orientation to the teachers and tenets of Sufi Islam, the ethnic group is known amongst Senegalese to maintain a cosmology based on spirit: their drumming, occult crafts, and wrestling traditions are prized throughout the region. Polyphonic song, ritual poetry and interlocking drum tones saturate Serer community life with sound in the cultural homeland of Ndagane-Samb. Here, storytelling, ritual,

and poetry are sounded in the layered tones and rhythms of the Serer language, which carry all the compositional possibilities of music.

These ethnic customs, while recalling the kinships systems, animistic beliefs, and occult practices that anchor the classic Africanist studies, work beyond the axis of tradition/modernity to operate spatially, in multiple representational circuits at once: they line the Sine-Saloum cultural-tourism economy, work as a basis for the stylization of daily life, and anchor contemporary life events, from the drum parties of graduating students to the talismans of the wrestlers who animate the booming national sports industry. Throughout Soukeye's family compound, musical instruments and their players come and go day and night. In the late afternoon, as local kids and tourists mix on the dusty paths near the market, the men of the family bring home small fortunes when they perform *Simba*, the man transformed into a dancing lion, who catches and troubles passerby until they empty their pockets. Late-night, the teenage boys of the larger household will dance and drum behind Soukeye's singing at the local tourist venues where a smattering of vacationing middle-class French patronize the bar and seek romance with young women.

This part of the Senegalese coast is also known for its male *sai-sai* hustlers, who act as tour guides and companions, and for whom the robust Serer customs are an opportunity to fascinate foreign companions with the richness of their *cossan*. But even as the men bring in small, irregular parcels of cash from their encounters with tourists, the lifeblood of Soukeye's family income comes from the women's participation in a rotation of feminine rituals that sustain the community: naming ceremonies for new babies, marriages, the arrival of a new wife to a household, the return of a family member from work abroad. Every nook and cranny of the

compound houses extra tin *bools* and gourd *lekkits* for this purpose; both are used to make music and prepare food, the staples of village life. When an event arises, these are emptied and carried under the griottes' arms for music making. The women of Soukeye's family will lead the song and the ceremony. It is their specialty, and they are known throughout the region to be the best at what they do.

Ndagane calls to French djembe players, romantic Belgian expats, and tourists who prefer a superficially traditional village setting. These are unaware that in the last twenty years, the Senegalese have themselves largely constructed the camp on top of the village as an attempt to draw tourists down the developed coast and into its more affordable folds. Drawing resources form its position in between the big city and the ancient village, Ndagane is both a self-conscious double to urban Dakar and to the inaccessible Mar Lodj *campement*. While the deep Serer traditions of sorcery, wrestling, and ritual remain strong in Ndangane, many townspeople manage to earn their small incomes by selling faux African jewelry made of Chinese plastic beads and sarongs printed with Polynesian orcas. Tourists nearly always leave town with a scalpful of braids and a local Senegalese "family" to whom they wire euros from time to time. Together, these exotic bits and pieces articulate a story of strategic African village authenticity, a mode of self-representation by which the local people bring in income from far-flung outsiders.

SOUND AND SUSTENANCE

It's my third extended visit to Ndagane to visit with the Sene-Faye family, whom I also know from my engagement as a drum student and adopted household member with their cousins near my home in Dakar. I have been sharing a mattress with Soukeye's family for a week now, and am enjoying time away from the polluted city for the relative slowness of Ndagane. Here, I

am able to share extended hours with the family rather than find myself pulled away to the obligations of visiting friends and neighbors in the neighborhood, negotiating with food vendors, finding transportation to the market, and attending a constant program of local celebrations. Here, where national funding cuts mean less than a few hours of electricity a day, we sit together in the intense, swampy heat and humidity of the Senegalese Delta and talk. In between preparations for rituals and performances, the women slice vegetables, negotiate the food market, and make intensive preparations for upcoming events, relieved to catch any hint of a breeze as evening falls. We can hear the elder Serer women singing over an old soundsystem a mile down the road as they announce tomorrow's village wrestling match. We hear another group practice their djembe (an recently-imported drum style with origins amongst the Mandinke and Peul of Guinea) and dance for a vanful of tourists near the pier. The townspeople will crowd the wrestling field while the tourists tie on Chinese-made sarongs from the market and pay a few euros for dance lessons. Each of these many activities issues a sound that meets and mixes with the others in the soundscape of the Delta.

The women of the Faye compound tell me to meet them in the hut after lunch to record some of their songs and to talk about their work in *cossan*.[172] As we cook a pot of *attaya* mint tea, Soukeye, her mother Dia Faye, her aunts Adji Rama Seck and Sanou Faye, her cousins Rose and Ndeye, and a handful of women friends, neighbors and kids *dadje* (get together) to talk about their work. Soukeye is the youngest of this practicing family griottes, and the others are invested

[172] After these years of work with the women, they understand that I am always interested in their ideas about culture and song for my research project, and they appreciate my attention, admiration, and repeated gifts of photo portraits, shiny robes, and fine incense from the markets of Dakar; classic gratuities for griots. I tell them that I am happy to give them CDs and a *clé* jump drive of the session to keep and do so.

in teaching her their performative craft.[173] The elders are doing me a favor by leaving their chores for a generous swath of time, but they are also enjoying themselves; the mud-brick walls of the hut resonate with laughter as the women share their favorite songs and teach me about voice, song and ritual. They interrupt each other to tell me about their favorite ritual songs: the teasing *xa-xar* chant–a ritual cruelty–directed toward an arriving second household wife; the Serer songs to celebrate circumcision and facial *tatouage*; the celebratory song for a newly married couple's first sexual encounter.

These women, veteran griottes, tell me that culture is not in their blood, but is passed through their *wenn*: the mother's milk as expressed to the child. They tell me this at once, loudly, smiling, and grab their breasts as if to express milk: "It's the breast!" The griotte's voice–and the power that goes with it– involves both birthright and transmission. For these women, practices of sounding involve both genealogy and pedagogy. [174]

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[173] or more on the growing body of anthropological work on young people's critical perspectives in African Studies, see Chernof, *ibid*.. "Social scientists who work in traditional African Societies often befriend older people as those who know their culture and preserve it, because older people have experience, knowledge, and judgement. But older people I met there told me that it is young people who make culture, because young people are the ones who start things, and when the young people become old, what was new becomes old with them. One reason for believing that the marginal young people are carrying on a ulture that is genuine and not spurious is that they do not make a point of claiming cultural authenticity in any kind of ideological or exclusive way,..." 42.

[174] In the strains of the griotte's songs are a number of critical power dynamics. In her study of the Wolof xaxar, Marame Gueye finds that the performance of wedding songs both benefits the patron and the griotte herself. The wife vents frustrations, expresses her knowledge of sister-in-laws' secrets, and suggests that the new wife obey her, as the griotte and the women of her community celebrate feminine empowerment:
I walk past you wearing gold
You want to join us
I park a car
You want to join us
I wear diamonds, you don't know where they came from
You want to join us,
This has been accomplished by the vaginas
The penises are capable of nothing!

Esi Sutherland-Addy and Aminata Diaw, eds. *Women writing Africa. West Africa and the Sahel,* New York : Feminist Press at the City University of New York, 2005, 165.

Adji Rama, a vibrant, matronly *personalité* who makes a living selling items to tourists on the main Ndagane strip, emerges as the star of the afternoon: she lights up when she begins to sing the songs she so often leaves by the wayside as she works long days as a companion to the tourists. Her wizened voice bears the proud vocal nodes of a seasoned griotte, and she winds them through a number of songs of her own composition, each strong enough to leave her companions impressed and beaming. These songs draw from ancient Serer themes of love, generosity and friendship, but they fashion themselves in the composed, cosmopolitan sounds of the city. These are the kinds of pop-crossover griot's songs favored by the national arts initiatives that, under Senghor, staged cossan showcases at the national Serrano theater. Soukeye's mother, Dia Faye, was once a featured singer at the Serrano. Today, she sings a song or two, but her health is weak. I think I catch a glimpse of joy in her eyes as she drums on a gourd and lets a few of her own verses go full-volume, but I know that soon, her tired physique will rest against the warm evening wall of her hut. Soukeye will make a platter of stew for dinner while Dia naps soundly.

SOUND OF THE CITY

The sounds of thousands of shuffling Dakarois feet resonates through my open apartment door. They sustain the call of the *muzzein*, the shouts of the street vendors, the mobile sound systems of the Sufi *dahiras*. One can always hear the voices of griots in this *mass sonore,* as they praise those they pass on the street and filter, in the form of *mbalax* dance-pop, through the speakers of old French transistor radios. I wonder if they will wake napping Soukeye, who is spending a couple of days in my apartment in the Medina neighborhood before she returns home to the village. The people there know she's had good work over the weekend and will expect her

to contribute beyond her share to the household expenses, to pay for good fish and new clothes, and to distribute small monetary favors throughout the community. Neighbors will ask for alms. Soukeye is spending some time in between, where she catches a little air of her own.

For millennia, the griots across ethnic groups have sung for kings, mediated conflict, narrated conquests and stood the front lines of war to wage battles of words and rhythm. Their powerful ability to make or break leadership, to turn the tides of battle, or to influence policy decisions with the turn of a clever phrase have made them both necessary and feared across millennia. As they were once lain to burial in the hollows of the ancient Baobab trees so as not to pollute the village soil with their powerful spirits, today the griots are always given a small token of cash or goods upon request. Such is their ability to move others to action, the general Senegalese population do their best to avoid griot's homes and hangouts. A griot is both stigmatized and powerful. The Wolof and Serer gewels, tell me that they were never sold to slavery.[175] As the defeated nobles became enslaved to their conquerors, the gewels were so feared by the capturing king that they became incorporated into his court and lavished with gifts. In this sense, the gewels were always outside the caste system: they were patronized by, not conscripted to, their rulers. They have always lived *en media*.

While most griots pride themselves on familiarity with their own ethnic traditions, their traditional songs do not represent an essential or static past. They are assemblages that represent millennia of regional movement as they combine a series of regional languages, village rhythms, sub-ethnic rituals, and family styles. They have ages of travelogues coded into their very forms, sounds, words, and rhythms. Any contemporary Senegalese griotte will know the songs of her

[175] This was repeated to me many times informally and expanded upon during my interview with Imam Sene, a patriarch of Soukeye's family, on March 6th 2011.

direct family's ethnic village (or peoples, if she is the daughter of interethnic marriage), a litany of re-invented traditional chants updated by Senegalese pop singers and dispersed through national media, the village rhythms and dances favored by the winning national sports heroes, and the chants preferred by the women of her city neighborhood who invite her to perform. As the population of Senegal is condensed in Dakar's contemporary urban streets, the griotte's voice has become a critical medium for the articulation of Senegaleseness as it binds the urban with the rural; the global with the ethnic, and the mediated popular with the substance of *cossan.*

Even as she represents longstanding family traditions of praise singing, the griotte is herself a *de-essentializing* figure by virtue of her interethnic creativity, a series of styles and practices the Senegalese call *cossan*. *Cossan* is a way of describing a series of values and practices that are recognizably, interethnically Senegalese in the contemporary global context. This term for describing culture is distinct from the term *adda*, which describes practices rooted wholly in specific ethnicities and/or places: *tatouage*, shamanistic practices, or village identification practices including drum rhythms and clothing styles. Cossan, a term that gained currency under the unifying Senghor regime, is more often used to describe contemporary, hybrid, modern, popular, or otherwise emergent practices that retain a distinct Senegaleseness. Drawn from the Wolof word for origin, *cossan* is that which originates in the national complex that is Senegal. While the notion of *adda* calls forth a particular ethic identity, any contemporary Senegalese person at the crossroads of urban life, nomadic practices, and shifting linguistic systems necessarily articulates a special convergence of multiple adda. In each griot's voice and song is carried a unique confluence of sounds and styles; a different articulation of Senegaleseness.

As they cultivate these traditions in the global present, the gewels and other regional griots become the bearers of *cossan*: the cultural integrity of the region depends on their ability to survive and thrive amidst contemporary circumstances. While cossan denotes a particular Senegaleseness that is different from other African and global cultures, current discourses on cossan place it in counterpoint to *affaire yi toubab,* or "white people's things," and the persistence of cossan displaces the need for foreign goods, styles, foodways, or aesthetic values. The sound of Dakar, the West African metropolis, has always been grounded in griots' voices, and contemporary Senegalese discourses on the relationship of the musical word to institutions of power are cast in the gewels' performative terms. As the basis for the indigenous structures of power that intertwine with modern government, the gewels' immense knowledge of vocal materiality is necessary to any study of cultural politics in the Senegambia region; Soukeye's fireside song bears upon an affective world that extends far beyond her hearth.

The male gewels tell me time and again of their customary station at the front of battlefields, of their powers as political spokespeople, and their ability to cultivate wealth through the use of skill and wit. The dissolution of the rural kingships has dispersed the griots' livelihood from the wealthy court to the city street, to be pieced together in small parcels from the pockets of those who circulate there. Most of the male griots, once employed by the court, have taken up work as merchants, teachers, or tradesmen in the city, where money is easier to come by. Today, the men of Soukeye's Ndagane family, including her praise-singer father, have largely *genn* (literally, "gone": one does not speak of death directly in this culture), or have moved on to other homes, other hopes for work in the city. The women griottes of Soukeye's family, whose work has traditionally taken place in the realms of ritual and community life

outside the courts of rulers, struggle to compensate for these contemporary circumstances. As the men travel further from their families in search of work, the women become entrenched in the struggle to survive day-to-day. They must conduct the heavy business of domestic life while also locating income from the tourists and city dwellers who represent the only influx of resources to the region.

The city of Dakar pulls Soukeye and her family from the village and into its density of music-making, ritual voicing, political announcement, Islamic calls to prayer, and roaring crowds. As a young woman equipped with few resources beyond a skilled and schooled voice, Soukeye's engagement with this body in sound reveals the hidden political economy of the gewels' work. Soukeye's voice is flexible enough to participate in multiple economies at once: the tourist industry of the disco, the sponsored showcases of the contemporary African state, the occult economy of ritual, and the critical politics of self-articulation in style. This voice is a resource she carries with her between the postcolonial city and the emerging village: a regional culture set in the nomadic Subsaharan Sahel. Migrant laborers and semi-nomadic herders and businesspeople manage to cultivate resources from a largely barren, desertifying land. They do this in processes of crossing from one place, one cultural and economic system, one mode of trade to the next; in this legacy of dynamism, intercultural conversation and movement, the Senegalese themselves tend not to fetishize the materials/representations of the past; the griotte's identity is emergent, and the voice that is its archive travels light.

Here, tradition is less displaced than it is condensed; the gewels' role in society is, in the metropolis, transposed. Rather than meander through the weeklong loops of a village marriage or naming ceremony, the city's most visible gewels appear in four-minute videos on afternoon TV.

They dress like Jamaican dancehall divas or Bollywood soap stars, and they perform playback performances set to prerecorded CDs. Even so, the unmistakable *ngewelé*–the intense aesthetics of griot style–and the Senegaleseness of *cossan* remain intact, even as they remain in emergent conversation with the global circumstances that surround them. For the griots of the Senegambia, culture is a constant topic of conversation. To the Senegalese at large, the preservation and practice of *cossan* is the topic of daily television shows, newspaper commentaries, a fever-pitch of culture festivals, and national budgeting. The object of these discourses in to cultivate the Senegalese value of *xam-xam:* deep knowledge of the world and its forces.

Like many of Dakar's migrant majority, Soukeye and her wider family are in constant circulation between rural tourist or agrarian villages (*dekk cossan*: "cultural village") and a crowded interfamilial compound in the Dakaroise *banlieue*, or outer suburb, of Guediawaye. Many of these migrants, while raised largely in the city, have re-established households in the villages as cost of living in Dakar rises as wages and work opportunities fall with the economy. They sustain these households with months of labor on the street corners of the city, where these Serer washer-women launder plastic tubs of local residents' clothing. In Dakar, they cannot afford housing, so they sleep outside on the streets of Dakar with their small children. The women of Soukeye's Ndagane household must work tirelessly to manage this bare economic ground. Her family rotates between the Dakar neighborhood of Guediawaye, where they pile into the beds of their second cousins, and their home in Ndagane-Samb; their sustenance, untenable in either home, is only made possible in the movement between these two economies.[176] Migrant

[176] In the contemporary Senegalese context, constant change is both the basis of subsistence in the face of economic failure, and one to which the population of Senegal is well-suited given their historical situation in the Sahel, which has remained semi-nomadic for millennia. The nature of this nomadism, however, is emergent in character and responsive to postcolonial movements of capital.

workers such as these largely comprise the Dakar metropolis, who head to the city when trickle-down income becomes available. The first of the month brings fresh paychecks for big-city government employees and the domestic workers and merchants they support, and large wrestling and soccer matches bring vending opportunities and ticket monies. Some of these resources make their way to migrant workers, who send their small earnings to their families for daily rice, for medical emergencies, and for ritual celebration during Islamic holiday seasons.[177]

Throughout its yearly climate and holiday cycle, the city inhales and exhales its migrant public as it returns to the towns to redistribute any money or resources earned in the city. In the village, a city CFA stretches far; food costs are low, transportation is unnecessary, and there is always space to sleep away from Dakar's chronic overcrowding. For the griots, there is money to be made in the high ritual seasons that accompany these cycles. Soukeye's placement in either center is a matter of constant calculation; she and her family travel in these ebbs and flows depending on the currency of her voice. Known in both locations as particularly talented with music and spectacle, she and her family are sought after to perform in either context: the large sabar dance-and-drum circles of the city, which they grace with their poetry and praise song, and both the deep rituals–built on the cult of the musical word–and the tourist industry of the country. It's easier for them to bring in tourist money in Ndagane, where Soukeye's family is the most talented group in town, but the exponentially higher income of Dakarois Senegalese means that ritual work is better paid: a small tip to a *griotte* for a verse of praise in the city can equal an entire night's work in the struggling circles of Ndagane women.

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[177] See James Ferguson, *Expectations of Modernity: Myths and Meanings of Urban Life on the Zambian Copperbelt (Perspectives on Southern Africa)*, UC Press, Berkeley, 1999.

For this family, the ritualized voice, and its associated media of talking drum, dance and spectacle, have been the primary resource for survival for generations. While the systems of artistic patronage once built into the Senegambian social system are dispersed in the context of the post-village city, the gewels of Sine-Saloum have used their skill and schooling with the musical word to bring urban and international resources into their rural community. In turn, they carry the resource of ethnicity with them into the city of Dakar. Central to this family's survival is Soukeye's voice; it has the special strength and harmonics to animate any chant or ritual taasú poem with aural intensity and emotional depth. You can hear her mom in this voice, and the Sufi praise singers, and the voice of Yandé Codou Sene, the voice of Senegal, a Serer voice using the Wolof language in a Serer cadence, and those of the Yaay Fall praise singers of the Sufi order. It is a voice meant both to lead and to resonate with those belonging to others, polyphonically. In its folds are critical discourses on temporality, memory, genealogy and aesthetics that come from Souekeye's familial musical pedagogy, the *gnoses* of her Serer people, and her own experience at the intersection of religious, ethnic and world systems on the West coast of Senegal. I engage this anthropology of assemblage and juxtaposition in its register of audibility.

The life force of Dakar is manifest in its body in sound: a city of voices that lay in between the otherwise discreet worlds of Empire and (post)colonial subjectivity. The power of the voice animates a hidden economy by which many Senegalese people manage to build robust lives from otherwise meager resources, and it works as a locomotive force to the constant migration of Dakar's griots as they collectively locate and redistribute capital throughout the population. The ritual described here, which follows Soukeye Dieng and her family in a loop between the struggling rural village and the cramped quarters of he big city, locates the substance

of Dakar's body in sound in the timbres of the griotte's voice: the voice of culture. Here, I consider the media by which the rural ethnic *campement* and the postcolonial metropolis–sites of ethnic *adda* and cosmopolitan *cossan*, respectively–reconfigure each other as contemporary sites of struggle, intervention and imagination for Senegalese women. While traditional patronage systems have changed, the political economy of the griot endures in important and unexpected ways. An anthropology of media, grounded in indigenous theories of aesthetics and affect, illuminates this event in two registers.[178] First, it illustrates the ways in which the griottes transpose customary vocal practices to work for them in the contemporary urban context. Secondly, it attends to the complex, nuanced movement of materials, currency, and other resources that would otherwise remain obscure in a any study of Senegalese vocal performance. Here, I locate the hidden negotiations, redistributions, and spaces of empowerment that account for the urban Senegalese dedication to life-cycle ritual.[179] The work of Soukeye and her family, as it resonates with the work of thousands of other griot families throughout the Dakar cityscape, is a critical layer to the body in wound that is urban Dakar. Here, it illustrates the critical importance of this customary ritual culture of excess, noise, festival, and flash to contemporary postcolonial survival.

THE AFFECT OF RITUAL

[178] For more on the work of aesthetics, see Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste,* Routledge, 2013.

[179] In her comprehensive study of women's political economy in Dakar, Beth Ann Buggenhagen describes a "social discourse of excess" through which the aesthetics of life-cycle ritual hold in their folds a complex system of wealth accumulation and redistribution. Most interesting is her observation of the struggle between Dakaroise women's comportment toward this cultivation of excess through ritual and mediating discourses on Islamic austerity, masculine leadership, and monetary investment in buildings and other concrete goods. I argue that the griottes are particularly attuned to these discourses and often instigate and encourage aesthetic excess to the ends of greater redistribution. Buggenhagen, ibid., 201.

Ndagane must be silent tonight, and the lamps of the village discotheque must be dark. Soukeye's entire household, the lifeblood of the tourist village's social scene, have bussed up to Dakar for cousin Bigueye Sene's wedding in Guediwaye. Bigueye, the sassy little sister of the Sene family of Serer griots, is to marry another young griot in the banilieue this weekend, and the festivities, peopled with the most fashionable Dakarois singers, dancers, drummers and fashionistas, will last throughout three days and nights. Upshore, in urban Dakar, the entire family hearth is contained in the vessel of a stool-sized propane tank, which sits on the compound floor like a squat stovetop. The ring of straw-roofed huts that comprise this family compound in the *dekk cossan* ("cultural village") contorts to fit the resonant hallway of a cement apartment building or a cluster of mud-brick rooms off the busy street. Soukeye's urban family fits five-to-a-bed in their parcel in Guediawaye, a poor outer neighborhood packed with migrant rural families. The gewel women of Ndagane took the bus to Guediawaye as it passed through the Delta at 4 a.m. this morning; now, in early afternoon, they work their busy hands over a village's worth of borrowed cooking *lekkits.* We are in the heart of Maga Daan, a section of Guediawaye in which unpaved, sandy paths–packed too loose for most vehicles to attempt–culminate in an open field, piled with blowing Sahara dust–that makes scarce urban space for soccer games and Sufi chants. The Sene women's clear Serer voices tumble into the street and bounce throughout the neighborhood, drawing visitors into their fold. They pull the community into the celebration at hand, and in the process bring the resources of cash, clout and blessings to the table.

Bigueye's new husband is a Wolof gewel from the neighboring suburb of Parcelles. As the bride unites with her husband, her family allies with another ancient griot family and

strengthens the network between two influential musical communities across Dakar's outer neighborhoods. Although caste lines are quite often crossed in contemporary Dakar, Bigueye's choice to marry into another gewel family reinforces a continuity of kinship that will pass the musical future of the family into the heart of the next generation: her children will be steeped in the culture of voice and readily recognized as gewels throughout the city. This futurity–and the alliance with another great griot family–is marked by a three-day ritual that showcases the best of *cossan*: two full days of food and sabar, the spectacular slaughtering of sheep and cows, the ritual Islamic *takk* enacted by the men of the neighborhood, and, on the ultimate ritual day, the introduction of the new wife into the husband's family home.

A host of famous Senegalese pop stars and respected elder praise singers–themselves from griot families who support the strengthened network of *cossan*–will contribute to the event's performative fabric. They will do a favor for these families–all historically interrelated along myriad genealogical lines–by performing without upfront fees. As they offer their musical talent to their old friends' family ritual, their voices will bring to bear *barké*, or blessings. They will also bring an infusion of cash to the gewel community: these praise singers are also cannily aware that any gewel's celebration is one in which large cash gratuities will flow into performers' pockets. Any monied participant in the festivities will find herself praised in song; thus celebrated, she is bound to stuff large bills into the hand of a singer, the body of a kora, or the mouth of a dancer. To look stingy amidst a company of griots is to court character assassination. Ultimately, these women griottes leave the ritual with enough gifts and gratuities to last them weeks of sustenance at home.

A griot's wedding is big business for the merchants and artisans of the neighborhood as well: corner tailors across the banlieue have been sewing swaths of shiny *bazein* cloth into flowing robes and *taille-bas* costumes for the men and women, who insist on wearing new *yere cossan* ("cultural clothes") to such a visible high ceremony. The merchants up and down the neighboring *Tally bu Mag* market route have been selling an extra measure of bugle beads and the latest cloth patterns from Mauritania and Mali. The local family of Peul herdsman has liquidated a number of their flock of sheep; another has sold a cow to the Sene family. The local proprietors of a shade tent and soundsystem rent our their wares. Even the less talented local griot women have already made pocket money as they work the neighborhood as singing telegrams: inviting neighbors to the event, door-to-door. All of these locals, and many more, acknowledge the Sene family of gewels for their sustenance this week. The griots, in the intensity of their commitment to *cossan*, stir the neighborhood economy in the days leading up to the ritual. The height of this redistributive stirring coincides with both the height of the ritual and the deployment of Soukeye's voice.

With their canny awareness of the investments that such an endeavor entails, the Sene family has rented a wide circle's worth of white plastic chairs from a local shop. The family of sabars travels and taps with the young boys of the family as they anticipate the festivities to come. These three days of high Senegalese ritual–shaped by the interethnic cultures that intersect and cohere in the urban banlieue–manifest the core aesthetic practices that are the topic of regular gewel conversation, as the women of Ndagane spoke about the aesthetics of *cossan* in our conversation in the hut. The women of Ndagane, expertly skilled in the arts of the ritual voice and schooled in the arts of hustling, make themselves the vocal centerpiece of the

festivities, and in doing so, place themselves at the epicenter of the resources such a density of interaction entails.[180] As these aesthetic practices work through the contemporary three-day *takk* (marriage) ritual in the big city of Dakar, the occult economic power of the voice of culture comes to light. These practices of curation, undertaken carefully by the griotte women of Dakar, contribute to much more than the milieu of the city: they evidence the composition of a critical body in sound, governed by an aesthetics of inclusion and resonance. The hum of life in everyday Dakar, when examined though the lens of these core aesthetics, shows a deliberate creative process that marks it both uniquely Dakarois and uniquely suited to the contemporary needs of the people of the city.[181] As the ritual unfolds through the deployment of these core aesthetics, I trace the movement of disparate, partial, minute, or hidden materials through the vocal event and into the continued livelihoods of Soukeye and her family.[182]

In the introduction to her (2010) volume on the question of the beautiful and the ugly in the African arts, Sarah Nuttall describes the political economy of African aesthetics on its own terms:

> ...the question of beauty as it relates to Africa has often been read within the register of frivolity, and dismissed as a result in relation to the sublime power of economics or politics. Put differently, in view of the forms of human degradation of which the African continent is seen to speak, to talk about beauty has been implicitly encoded as not simply superfluous but indeed morally irresponsible if not reprehensible. According to such a

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[180] The hidden registers of this material movement become evident upon close attention the ways in which Senegalese core performative aesthetics–assembled from the traditions of the numerous ethnicities that for contemporary Dakarois culture–shape the ritual. This contemporary Dakarois marriage ritual is animated by a series of core aesthetics by which the Senegalese griots describe the textures of their work–and of *cossan*–throughout my study. This anthropology of Senegambian vocal aesthetics draws from indigenous discourses to make evident the relationship of vocal style to the regional political economy.

[181] "Any event involving sound is called music if it involves a surplus force." Nuttall, *ibid.*, 76.

[182] In Soyinka, Of Africa: "Africa's truest assets: "its humanity, the quality and valuation of its own existence, and modes of managing its environment—both physical and intangible (which includes the spiritual)."

> view, a study of beauty would distract our attention from the multiple permutations of social distress with which we are confronted.[183]

Senghor, Sembene, Soyinka, Ba, Achebe, and a host of other independence-era cultural leaders emphasized the ways in which traditional African aesthetic practices hold global political potential.[184] In her comprehensive ethnographic study of women's life-ritual in contemporary Dakar, Beth Ann Buggenhagen locates an immense political economy hidden in the movements and materials of the women's gathering.[185] In the passage that follows, I trace a series of such practices as they structure an ethics of beauty, co-resonance, and wealth redistribution. Here, I mine what Mbembe calls the *social epistemology* of Senegalese women's musicmaking: "the socially recognized rules which underlie the production of the beautiful."[186] Here, I recognize a number of Senegalese rules of musical beauty: *kessé* (curation), *jaxasé* (intermixture), *yermandé* (resonance), *saff-saffal* (spice), and *neexal* (excess) as they animate a ritual world that nourishes Senegalese creativity and yields a thriving Dakarois informal economy. Moreover, they undergird an urban culture of sounding. Senegalese musical aesthetics teach modes of cultivation, curation, and communication by which the Senegalese elide stifling socioeconomic circumstances and imagine community futurity: new musical modes in new possible worlds.

A thousand women are stirred by the sound of the event and their own anticipation of a fine spectacle, draw near the Sene household, and entwine themselves in Bigueye's sabar circle, amongst the thick piles of dust that are the Guediawaye streets. The ritual circle that will function

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[183] Nuttall, ibid., 13.

[184] See Wole Soyinka: *Politics, Poetics, and Postcolonialism* (Cambridge Studies in African and Caribbean Literature), Cambridge, *xiv*.

[185] See Buggenhagen, *ibid.*, 201.

[186] Mbembe, *Variations*, 70.

as a space of greeting and tribute, of praise singing and sacrificial slaughter, and an earthshaking sabar dance party is less a static formation than it is an emergent cluster of crisscrossing trajectories. It is a *jaxasé* (pronounced, ja-ha-say)–a Wolof notion of a "tangle"–that has become a common description of the cosmopolitan intermixtures that characterize contemporary Senegalese society. The notion has a valence of incomprehensibility: a jaxasé can be a traffic jam brought on by the recent movement of millions of rural Senegalese to the city of Dakar, a roadmap of the streets of a new neighborhood, the perfect mixture of traditional mint tea, or the patchwork robes of the resourceful Baay Faal, a sub-brotherhood of the Mouride Sufi order whose drumming, ring dance and song recall deeply ancient practices of cossan. For women, the aesthetic of jaxasé emerges in elaborately twisted hairstyles, intricate exchanges of clothing and goods, and any crowd drawn to a concert, a ritual, or a sporting event. The word is often used by participants to describe a high point of the frequent sabar dance celebrations in which women throw open their long robes and leap into the air in a lightning-fast series of impossible poses and swoops as the drummers respond quickly to the point of sublime intensity. In these moments, the performance of these musical women embodies the tradition, innovation and complexity of Senegalese society as a whole.

The aesthetic of jaxasé has a particular valence in the context of the big city: it is a practice of cultural co-operation that allows individuals and groups to maintain their distinctness within the overall project of Senegalese social, economic, political and cultural independence. Although Senegal encompasses a wide series of ethnic groups, many Senegalese have chosen Wolof as a common language as an alternative to the colonial French, and they speak it in tandem with Arabic, French, English and an assemblage of indigenous languages. Where a tangle

in the modes and means of capital would most often represent an inconsistency to a linear infrastructure, the Senegalese jaxasé is in itself the social character. The jaxasé has a very special function in a region beset with a chronic lack of natural resources and capital: it assembles an emergent whole that is more than the sum of its discrete parts. The body of the jaxasé is the density of this material tangle, which stirs and collects a critical mass of its own. It can be seen, danced with, and heard by those in the neighborhood, before it loosens and dispels its participants and materials as quickly as they gathered, sometime in the moments leading up to the local *muzzein's* call to prayer at daybreak.

Throughout the night, the voices of the gewel women overlap with the rounds of the dance, the trajectories of the cameramen, and the movements of the family rituals at hand. Soukeye's trajectory is entangled in the loops and whorls of the ceremony: conspiring with her aunts about an upcoming chant, joking with her cousins about a nearby dancer, nursing little Samba at the threshold of the family compound. As she moves between her village home and the crowded corridors of Dakar, Soukeye locates her family's sustenance in the textures of the jaxasé. In the folds of this cultural tangle are assembled a series of resources: countless gratuities, plates of rice and cups of café, and the less tangible capital represented by the event's microphone. Soukeye and the women in her family make a living from this hidden cache, and as they pass the mic amongst themselves, keep their village livelihoods in mind.

After she helps with a few hours of food preparation and event planning, Soukeye prepares for her featured role in the celebration with a trip to the local hair salon, where dozens of women from her community are getting coiffed and made up by trainees from the local beauty school. She has brought in swatches of her outfit for the evening to show the makeup artist, who

opens a massive plastic palette of coordinating eyeshadows and gets to work. Soukeye prefers analogous color schemes in the fashionable color of the day: most of her current wardrobe tends toward copper and fuschia, hues popular with the costuming of the moment's American hip-hop videos and those of popular Bollywood actress Avika Gor, a current West African fashion muse. She will attach tiny gold faux piercings–a double homage to regional ethnic traditions and American hip-hop styles alike–under her eyebrow and above her lip. Every detail, down to the glitter polish glossing her hennaed nails, is matched perfectly. It evidences her knowledge of global trends, her facility with regional style, and her creative individuality.

As she arrives at the sabar, the result of Soukeye's careful curation becomes clear. Each woman at the party has created an impeccable kessé of her own: a unique visual composition. Together, hundreds of Senegalese women in kessé create a kaleidoscopic assemblage that, itself, reflects the popular colors, clothing styles, and aesthetics of the moment. One who does *kessé* exercises stylistic control and restraint according to the materials at hand: a critical recognition of and control over what is and what is not contained in a body. Ultimately, it is a practice of aesthetic curation, and its careful fulfillment endows its bearer with the kind of peer admiration and imitation necessary to the establishment of *personalité*, or social leadership, in her community.[187]

Kessé, in its demand for aesthetic uniqueness, commitment, and control, is a space of radical creativity for its practitioners: an emergent set of rules, and a stylistic lexicon by which individuality is made and re-made. The Senegalese women I ask about this term time and again

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[187] In my first month of fieldwork in Guediwaye, I looked up as I was walking to one of the countless galleys of kids who gather after school to people watch and play. With my mostly American clothes, I had managed to match my blue tank top, sandals and sunglasses with my white jeans. "Toubab defa kessé!" (The white person does *kessé*!) they shouted, surprised to see a foreigner invest in such coordination.

translate it to the French term "*juste*": a term that implies precision, accuracy, and limitation. Just as it shapes the visual style of the party and its participants, kessé also functions as an aesthetic of vocal composition for Soukeye, who chooses a series of musical themes, riffs, and choruses she will repeat throughout her performance, and that will be echoed by the other praise singers as they, together, compose the vocal whole of the three-day ritual.

At the height of the night's festivities, Soukeye steps into the center of the circle and, after a breath, lets her song loose. She commands the celebration, and in her song, channels its goings on into a single sublime register: that of her voice. She uses it to sing the family's legacy, of their generosity to their neighbors, of their devotion to Islam and their tithes to the *talibé*. She sings of matriarchs and patriarchs, and friends gathered at this feast tonight. Most importantly, she enacts such emotion in the strain of her voice, her wrinkled brow, her satisfied smile when singing of a particular point of familial pride, that she's convinced all in doubt of the family's importance in their community.

Soukeye's song brings a chorus of sympathetic vocalizations from the crowd: as her poetry unfolds, they whisper, "ndeysan" in agreement. *Yermandé*, a deep Wolof term without immediate translation, describes the Senegalese aesthetic of empathy. The Senegalese recognize the tangibility of yermandé by placing a hand over the heart, or by uttering the term, "ndeysan": the heart is stirred. The gewels use the term yermandé to talk about the importance of the arts: an example of true cossan, they say, "Defa am [it truly has] yermandé." In yermandé, the ethic of resnance, co-witnessing, they share an affective response.

The height of the ceremony, however, unfolds when another griotte, an elderly woman and friend of the family who has come from the desert region of Baol–an inland region in which

the semi-nomadic Sene family once traded Serer goods and services to Wolof villagers–asks to take the microphone. Her voice is wizened and her stance unstable, but it is clear that she has been moved into action. The circle of hundreds draws to a hush as she begins to sing of Bigueye's father, Moustapha Sene, and his family's generosity toward their community of Baol, before the family's move to Dakar in the 1960s. Her detailed knowledge of the family's deeds and the passion of her voice move much of the crowd to tears as her right hand fills with small bills and favors. She shows her dedication to the family in her willingness to exhaust herself with praises, and after she draws the party to an emotional halt, she hands the microphone to Soukeye and leaves the party satisfied.

While Dakar is thick with *sabars* and *takks*, street parties and ritual celebrations, the Sene family's party attracts a remarkably large, enthusiastic, and star-studded crowd, dressed in their very best couture. The scene manifests *saff-saffal*, or the spice of life, an aesthetic that often comes to play in life-cycle ritual. The Senegalese gewels are best known for the force of their personality, or *saff*: a term that both describes (in cooking) intensity of flavor, and (interpersonally) a bold, hilarious, forceful personality. Saff is often used to allude to an oversupply of spice (i.e.: a burning sensation on the tongue or a pressing need to empty the bladder), or cheekiness, especially in a young person (the term reew, or "rude" is considered taboo in polite circles) but in good measure, saff is necessary to both culinary appeal and personal force.

While most participants laugh and stumble home from the party, only some will do so with heavier pockets. The movement of materials that can be measured in small change, sachets of incense, fabric remnants, glossy photo mementos, cups of tea, and other ephemera, is the

culmination of a Senegalese aesthetic of *neexal*. Literally "that which pleases," neexal describes material that is gratuitous, excess, or extra-satisfactory.

Ultimately, the expertise with which these gewels activate their knowledge of sound and spectacle manifests itself in the exciting tenor of the event. The object of all of this ritual work is the culmination of *barké*, an interethnic regional term taken from the Arabic *baraka*. Barké both refers to the material rewards bestowed by Allah upon a righteous person and to the power of its bearer. As Soukeye sings her sister in a new home, the sounds of a host of neighboring events fill the Guediawaye air. Multiply these by thousands of different sizes each week in Dakar, and one begins to comprehend the liveliness of the national sonic stratum–and the hidden economy of this vast African metropolis. At the centers of these circles, always, are the women griottes. Here, they stir the night's festivities, poised, as they are, to reap the resources generated within.

CONDENSING TRADITION IN THE CITY: THE RURAL CAMPEMENT AND THE URBAN METROPOLIS

The complex and critical livelihoods of Senegalese women *griottes* trouble the easy rural-traditional/urban-Westernized binary that grounds classic academic and popular accounts of a globalizing Africa, a model John Chernoff calls "the political-economic techno-philosophical socio-historical global-developmental backdrop" of African studies. This approach presumes "a straightforward if somewhat awkward process of replacing indigenous traditions with western ones." He notes: "It is clear that no such straight lines exist."[188] Urban and village lives construct themselves in contemporary counterpoint to one another, even as the Senegalese remain moored in their own strategic, emergent constructions of ethnicity and locality. In Ndagane-Samb, the textures of Senegaleseness come into subtler relief than they do in Dakar, where a thick mix of

[188] Chernoff, *ibid.*, 13.

ethnicities collides visibly with the smooth, sublime architecture of French/capitalist imperialism. Both economies, situated in differential regimes of representation and subjectivity, require critical negotiation on the part of the vast population for whom village simplicity has given way to rural famine and urban poverty. Survival in Senegal depends on a family's ability to materialize resources that hang in the elisions between these two systems. The region's griots, long schooled in practices of close attention to social structures, representational nuance, and networking savvy, are known by the Senegalese for their ability to generate freelance–if intermittent–incomes through the manipulation of resources between the two locales.

The kinds of empowerment mined by Soukeye and her family in the slippage between "native" Senegal and its modern metropolis, wrapped as they are int he materialities of voice, spectacle, esoteric knowledge, and contingent representations of Africanness, are the substance of contemporary ethnographic work on African culture. In the rural regions of Togo, Charles Piot finds that "...today's ethnographic terrain–with its new sovereignties, its emergent forms of power, its diffuse and still inchoate differences, its religious imaginaries, its refusal of tradition and hybrid culture" requires a special theoretical toolkit to mine beyond the notions of tradition and hybridity that outline classic postcolonial theory.[189] As Dakar's political economy is manifest in the tangle of trade and capital that characterizes the busy city streets, Ndagane's negotiations emerge differently: in a series of strategic representations of ethnicity for tourist patrons, in personal relationships between the townspeople and its visitors, and in the careful redistribution, through cultural events, of minimal resources amongst the people. It also emerges in the critical remaking of traditional ritual forms by women griots and their peers. While the seeds of animist

[189] Piot, *ibid.*,8.

ritual manifest in Serer style are easily read by tourists, NGOs and ethnographers alike as anachronous survivals, I argue that the practices Soukeye and her family engage constitute an indigenous popular: a register of material practice by which these *gewels* of Senegal both imagine and influence global processes.[190] In the following passage, I transpose my representational register to that of the urban national theatre, where another gewel of the extended Sene family activates a wealth of traditional knowledge to cultivate an immense income from her spectacular pop performance.

A BODY IN SOUND: SPECTACLES OF SENEGALESENESS

Tonight, the theatre is filled exclusively with stars, each with a voice of her own, sparkling in couture robes of fine-spun *bazein* cloth and ornaments of crystal.

Each red velvet seat holds one of a thousand Senegalese *gewels*: a praise singer whose presence represents a line of specialized knowledge. Some have memorized intimately the stories of a particular family's lineage and deeds, others specialize in rituals of *tatouage* or infant-naming, and others have learned village histories or Sufi *xassayid* poetry from their forefathers and mothers. Some are language teachers; other are discotheque MCs, *sabar* conductors, or radio announcers. The featured performers–Fatou Laobe of the poetic Laobe people, superstar Youssou N'Dour, whose mother is a practiced praise-singing *gawlo* of the Pulaar people, and Serer praise poet and longstanding dance-club chanteuse Fatou Guewel Diouf–and their audience members have in common membership in the professions of eloquence: these are the bards of West Africa in their most concentrated numbers, gathered in opulence at the griots' ball.

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[190] Weiss , *ibid.*, 16.

L'Association de Griots Reporters du Senegal is holding their annual celebration at the intersection of ancient cultural inheritance and the contemporary hustle. This professional association is drawn from the ranks of news reporters who have a familial knowledge of the contexts of social action, and whose specialized training in the eloquent deployment of the word prepares them for mainstream careers in investigation, announcing and editorializing. Loosely called gewels in Senegal (the term is used by the Wolof and Serer peoples to describe heritage praise singers, speechmakers, ritual experts and musicians, in addition to the Mandé *jélis*, Pulaar gawlos, and the entirety of the musical Laobé and, sometimes, Djola peoples), the members of this group maintain specialized a social/cultural capital that upends the stratifications of postcolonial class. In contemporary Senegal, where community standing is the substance of capital, each griot possesses the eloquence to elevate or reduce the status of an individual in an instant through ritual song. They are extremely powerful and feared, and any oblique demand by them for cash from passerby, usually accompanied by a tailor-made song, must somehow be met. The Wolof legend says that the patron who cannot pay tribute to the gewel for a song must cut off and pay with his own right ear.

Although most griot reporters are men, their praise-singing female counterparts, whose work most often involves conducting ritual and stirring neighborhood spectacle, animate tonight's festivities. Standing tall in her spangled robes, a woman in the back of the room yells, "We are in a city for gewels. If we need money, we can just sing a song and have whatever we want!" Her peers agree enthusiastically: "Waawaaw!" ("Oh, yes!"), exclaim some. "Bilahi!" ("I swear to Allah!"), shout others. We know by her voice, her style and her confidence that she is a *taasúkat*: a woman gewel who specializes in ritual praise song. The exclamatory "LYYY-ly-ly-

ly"–which loosely translates to, "I swear [to Allah]"–is her certification. This is a gewel's expression, and one that must be delivered with a heavy measure of saff (spice). In fact, the Senegalese term for an excess of style references the region's primary generators of aesthetic power: *ngewelé*.

Taasúkat and mbalax recording artist Daro Mbaye sashays through the room. She is not a scheduled performer tonight, but she will be standing for its entirety, and will command the microphone intermittently. This time, she shouts praises to one of her loyal patrons, a *geer*, or descendant of a ruling family who has managed to maintain some wealth, who has accompanied her to the party. Her objective is to praise the patron and to receive her pay, all the while reestablishing herself as a respected praise singer amongst her peers and infusing the festivities with her own talent and style. The gewels also use their skills to praise each other; another shouts to whomever is now holding the mic: "You are so good, [Fanta Mbaye], you never take a bite of food without offering it to your mother first!"

Dripping with aesthetic gratuity, it is no wonder that the name for such an event is spectacle: the space is rich with enough baubles, gestures and animation necessary to wrap the exquisite voices that are its binding force. Their clothes follow one of two main aesthetics: the omnisex singularity of the grand *mbubu*–a floor-length robe made of billowing expanses of smooth colored cloth that shifts and shines above the wearer's movements–or the supercomplexity of bespangled, custom-tailored Senegalese soirée couture patterned in bugle beads and embroidery. Gewels, say the Senegalese, know how to wear clothes.

In this company, a short, early appearance by world music superstar Youssou N'Dour merits no further attention than a sideshow. Tonight, the women shine onstage. In fact, N'Dour's

playback performance, lipsynced to a recording of his song, "Lees Waxul," is less a display of his vocal talent than it is an opportunity for the other participants to play out their personalities with the dramatic prop of his presence. Each gewel arrives at the show with a pocketful of cash that she will distribute to the performers at hand, and for the women griots, the trip up and down the aisle to shove a bill in N'Dour's mouth or hand is the substance of the performance itself. It is their opportunity to display their spectacular *teranga*, or generosity: the most prized element of personalité for the Senegalese. N'Dour is bound to redistribute these donations by way of community gifts, tips to friends present at the event, and in acknowledging and including donors in his subsequent club and video productions. He graciously accepts an oversized check for a year of personal coverage from a sponsoring insurance company, takes a few photos, and exits the stage, an over-the top comedy dancer trails behind.

Fatou Laobé, a praise singer of the traveling Laobé tradespeople–singing woodworkers from Senegal's leafy northern river delta—appears onstage with her daughter, a popular music video dancer, beside her. "Fatou Laobé ca kaanam! Ca kaanam a kaanam a kaanam!" ("Fatou Laobé, push forward, push forward, push forward!") shouts the backing track. The daughter, wrapped in a sexy slit skirt and spangled brassiere, shakes a surfeit of hip-beads and jumps onto the seat of a theatre chair. The surrounding griots rise to make space and then stuff bills into her mouth as she uses her hips to enact the rhythm at hand. She pretends to self-consciously arrange her hip-length blonde coiffure and clothing in the musical breaks, and then flings it all apart again as the drummer takes a solo. "Ca kaanam a kaanam a kaanam!" shouts the room. Laobé's hands are full of cash she has collected throughout the room as she exits the room for backstage.

As the night pushes forward, overlapping voices and projects persist. The tiered order of the grand concert hall, built in the 1960s to launch the *Reniassance Africain* under President Senghor, is made unstable by the constant movements of the audience; the room becomes a churning circle of featured performers, grounded in knots of vocalization, interaction and exchange. After a few more acts, the tangle quiets with the promise of a tremendous presence as the red velvet stage curtain rises to reveal a full band. Set against the pan-ethnic village cutouts that are the Serrano's backdrop, the group deploys the pentatonic tones of an Arab-inflected praise song, grounded in the classic Wolof sabar beat as the ancient stringed instruments of *kora* and *xalam* animate the anchoring electric bass, clavier and guitar of Senegalese pop.

Fatou Guewel appears onstage dramatically, and her voice punctuates the room with a song about the Sufi holy city of Touba, a favorite with Dakaroise audiences:

Kaay leen Kaay lenn ngala lagg ci lenn	*Let us go, let us go, we are going to Touba*
Autorail aa ngiy nii	The transportation is waiting here
Ñew leen ñew dem Touba	Come, let's go to Touba

Guewel, amongst the most revered matrons of the popular arts in Senegal, is often depicted in street paintings and song as the embodiment of 19th-Century woman Sufi Saint Mame Diarra Bousso, whose son (Cheikh Amadou Bamba or Serigne Touba) founded the holy city of Touba. Her nightclub performances integrate long interludes of praise for the saint amidst songs of love and tragedy, and her voice–a crisp, exact medium for Arabic microtones and an amplifier for gritty exhortations of persuasion alike–is drawn from ancient bardic modes of projection and ornamentation: her fans suggest that Guewel has a special connection to *adda*, or pre-Islamic ritual practices. Her younger twin brothers anchor the backing band with the

percussive flurries of the *sabar* and *tama*: talking drums that echo Guewel's lyrics. She sways her curvy body and flips her lustrous, long black hair as she sings:

Kaay leen Kaay lenn ngala lagg ci lenn	Come on, Come on, please hurry up
Autorail aa ngiy nii	The train is waiting here [for us]
Ñew leen ñew dem Touba	Come, let's go to Touba

As soon as Guewel's voice resonates throughout the room, feedback takes over the sound system and the music dissolves into a gossiping, narrating and chatting milieu. Guewel stays inimitably calm and professional, smiling and coolly delegating tasks as she and her crew resolve the crisis through a flurry of rewiring, calculating feedback, locating cables and arranging the stage. The microphone remains in her hand. After another ten minutes of interjections, jokes and praises from the crowd, the music begins again, and Guewel sings:

Sama xool ak sama rooh	My heart and my soul
Bamba jël na ko	Bamba [Serigne Touba] has taken it up
Moom aawoon lu ma jaarel	He showed me its worth
Diiw dall noo cha dugé	This oil, if you dive in
Noonu nga chay takké	That is how [Serigne Touba's power] will cover you
Serigne Fallou moo ko xamal	I learned this from [his son] Serigne Fallou
Moo tax mu am lu kenn amul	That's why he has what no one has

The room churns in a steady stream of gewels, who take turns sashaying stagefront to place cash and jewelry into Guewel's right hand. As the artist receives her tribute, she improvises a new verse to her song, praising the person who has paid her tribute and asking for them blessings from the Sufi saints, particularly her woman patron, Mame Diarra Bousso. She drops the gifts to the stage, where her brothers sweep the tributes behind the vocal monitor; later, they will be transferred to a black velvet sack from which Guewel will pass out bills to those in the

receiving line on the way to her shining black SUV. She sings the praises of Serigne Touba by repeating his family name, Mbacké; each repetition calls forth an earlier generation of his family, and the gratuitous words "Touba" "Balla" and "Ayssa" are added in to add extra rhythm to her cadence.

Mbacké Mbacké

Touba Mbacké

Mbacké Mbacké

Balla Ayssa

The nearly 20-minute version of the song becomes improvisatory in its latter half, as Guewel mixes exhortations to the Mbacké family with praises for the patrons and friends who line the stage; all the while a backing chorus comprised of her group onstage and the bulk of the audience echoes every phrase. Guewel and her crowd translate the call-and-response of Serer ritual voicing into the register of the grand hall. The sabar rhythm doubles time for a musical break called a *jaxas* (or mixing) rhythm, and the crowd responds by moving more quickly, pushing their hands and purses above their heads at every beat. At the crossroads of catchy, danceable songwriting and highly skilled griot's practice, Guewel's composition tumbles into a flurry of improvised prayers and praises, melismatic flurries and ancient poetic fragments. The room stirs at Guewel's command, until finally, the last wavering notes of the kora sound as Guewel exits the stage and the red velvet curtain lowers.

At the griot's ball, stagefront in the wake of Fatou Guewel's powerful performance, the taasúkats have again taken over the microphones. Daro Mbaye reappears before the crowd, sensing an opening for a performance. She grabs the mic from the disappointed animator, placates him by calling him "Mon Cherie," and snatches the spotlight to the pleasure of her

peers. All are caught up in the dizzying velocity by which the materials of the fête are put into motion, assembled into collections and then redistributed, lavishness; confrontation, teasing and extraction; the vigorous shaking of bodies; cash and golden earrings flying and being wrangled; people cracking each other up and soliciting tips. This is the exuberant work of being a gewel: less a secondary or parallel economy than one that transgresses, or provides the medium of crossing by which one set of resources leaks into and through another, obscure economy of personality and cultural perpetuity. Guewel will devote a large portion of the thousands she has earned tonight to her charitable group who fund transportation, room and board to hundreds of women who wish to make the upcoming annual pilgrimage to Touba. The descendants of Serigne Touba, in turn, use the resources generated by the pilgrimage to replenish their vast communal peanut fields in the countryside, which in turn nourish the Senegalese population with communal water wells, livestock and land in the holy city.

Outside of the concert hall, things are still flying. Fatou Gewel is reaching into a black velvet purse and pulling out the Senegalese equivalent of twenty dollar bills for anyone who is able to catch and hold her attention, no matter how her wranglers try to prevent this. Imam steps into her line of sight. “Cousin!” shouts Guewel upon seeing his face. She hands him a big bill and tells him she’ll be waiting for his visit next week. Guewel tells us days later in her opulent Dakar home, over platters piled with delicious fried fatayas and fresh fruit, that another competing artist, a male singer notoriously jealous of Guewel’s power, pulled the microphones and monitor cables out of their sockets before her Serrano performance. He is threatened.

As a whole, the event of the griot’s ball serves to re-establish the political economy of sound and voice as alternative sites of power in the Senegalese postcolony. After fifty years of

droughts and migrations from the village, the griots no longer can rely on family patrons for a regular income. They will not, however, abandon their calling; they are skilled and schooled in the arts of improvisation, translation, and the ability to move others to action with their voices. In the decay of the old system of patronage, the gewels manage to engage and entrap resources anyway. At the evening's end–well after 3 a.m.–they will return home to everyday life, and to make the news. In this event, the griots have reestablished theirs as a body in sound: an assembly established through activity, affectivity, co-affectivity and sympathetic movement, and sociality structured in the materiality of voice. One gets the sense that, as the taasúkat claimed earlier in the evening, this city is theirs.

Surprised by my American presence at this event, a gewel shakes my right hand and shouts, "Gis naa djin, dé!" ("I am seeing a genie!"), giddy with the tenor of the evening. All are laughing, but this late hour of cold ground is known as the djinn's time to play: a time for supernatural mischief.[191] I am told by non-griots time and again throughout my ethnographic work in Senegal that the gewels are dangerous and to be avoided; moving in time with Fatou Guewel and her crowd, I find myself overjoyed with the feeling of being dangerous with them. The laughter, the food, the pride and the blessings are every bit worth the unstable sense of being out of my own control, but musical voice is the inescapable medium by which I and my investments are bound. When I breathlessly reach for *mil franc* to pay the taxi driver for the ride

[191] One knows a gewel by his or her cultivated ability to gather information about a conversant in a short amount of time. Imam Sene, who has adopted me as a daughter and trained me in the music and poetry of the Serer gewels, has taught me a few tricks; when I speak Wolof to a group of gewels inside, I tell them jokingly that I am an American gewel. It makes sense to them, after all, that someone must be in charge of this register of work in the US, and I've spent enough time hanging out with praise singers to pull off a few choice jokes and phrases with imitative finesse.

home, I find that I have emptied my purse somewhere within tonight's circle of gratuity. As I borrow the fare from the boutique owner on the corner, I wonder how my money is traveling.

CHAPTER 4: TOUSSA: GLOBAL SOUTHERNNESS AND THE TRANSCONTINENTAL HIP-HOP CONVERSATION

With a heavy diamond stud anchoring each ear lobe, hip-hop hustler Akon disembarks from his helicopter, spreads his arms to the sky, and sings his solvency from the bow of a high seas luxury yacht. For all its exuberance, the gesture is a stereotypical one for any Atlanta rapper. Here, the imaginary surrounding hip-hop's Southern "Third Coast"–one represented by Akon's formidable pop presence–is crisscrossed by classic cars, fast motorcycles, and sprawling liners. With Akon and his peers at its helm, the last decade has witnessed the dominance of Southern hip-hop in international commercial markets and neighborhood undergrounds alike. As Miami, Houston, Memphis, New Orleans and Virginia Beach center themselves in the global pop scene, this music travels in unlikely vehicles, including the body of Akon, the Senegalese-American singer whose voice represents Africa's most audible presence in American hip-hop.

> I get it in 'til the sun rise,
> Goin' 90 in a 65,
> Windows rolled down screamin' out:
> "Hey-ey-ey, I'm so paid."[192]

This latest chapter in Southern music, poised in the present tense, upends the notion that Southernness must wear its history on its sleeve; that it must cast itself in the frayed aesthetic of the handmade and moor its imagination in farm and country. Instead, Akon and his contemporaries represent a nation they call the "Dirty South": a loose family of artists, associated with the urban centers and creative communities of the American South and their

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[192] Akon, "I'm So Paid," featuring Lil Wayne and Young Jeezy. On Freedom, Konvikt Muszik/Universal Motown, 2008.

disapora, that rose to popular prominence in the last decade on a wave of novel productions and dancehall hits.

With its digitized production techniques and attention to high-end trend, the music is unapologetically super-modern; its "dirt" emerges in its bassy car soundsystems and club speakers alike, the badness in its hustler's lyricism, and the depiction of Scarface-inflected imagery in its videos. The music is time-stamped with unmistakable low-end, rocking beats; tinny synthesizer flourishes, heavily-processed vocals (often slowed down to sound vaguely sinister) and heavy lyrics with call-and-response choruses ready for instant memorization.

Akon's imagination, enunciated in an unmistakable sung tenor, wanders throughout a Southern landscape peopled with stories pulled from classic American pop: the lament of a young man incarcerated for life; the heart of a lonely lover without attention; the glorious payday. In the folds of this new music are assembled a series of resources by which Africans and Americans reinscribe their longstanding relationship: rhythms so laden with the flavor of speech that they demand audience response; the musical word, deployed in the heavily stylized voice; a vocabulary of migration and mobility that flips the scripts of disempowerment brought on by colonialism and the poverty it has imposed on the global Black diaspora. This study, drawn from my own ethnographic fieldwork with Southern US rappers and the young people of Dakar, Senegal, engages four practitioners whose work is activated at the new crossroads of the global "Dirty South": Akon, unflinching American rap star; his father, Mor Thiam, the Senegalese drummer and master of eloquence; Pape Ndiaye Thiopet, whose infuses his traditional Wolof ritual song with the rapper's burlesque as he brings new styles to African pop; and Toussa and a team of Senegalese women rappers who align their work with Southern hip-hop.

This chapter is grounded in four years of ethnographic work with this group of Senegalese women rappers as they voice the coordinates that mark all hip-hop practice: "who you are and where you're from."[193] When I heard Toussa, the president of the group, command the stage at her high-school talent show on the street of Guediawaye, Dakar, in 2009, I was impressed with her bold assemblage of sounds, language, and style, which on the whole resonates more with the hard-hitting, bassy sounds of current US hip-hop movements that the sample-based "old-school" sound that dominates much Francophone hip-hop (and, in turn, also dominates the sound of African hip-hop projects that receive European attention and funding).

While both academic studies and journalistic accounts of Third World hip-hop emphasize the importance of "positive" or "conscious" music–which they most often describe in terms of its lyrical liberalism and reference to US Civil Rights-era themes and samples–to socioeconomic and political transformation, Toussa and her community of hip-hop practitioners draw from a different kind of political consciousness: a polyvalent notion of culture and politics that works itself out in their comportment to a Black Atlantic solidarity, measured with the daily realities of life for young people of Africa and its diaspora. This art does not always appear, on its face, "positive," but instead manifests a complex model of politics drawn both from the worldviews of Senegambian people and the use of radical sound by which the current, often critically discounted, commercial hip-hop moment is defined. Here, the act of imagining different possible worlds, articulated in the media of thick sound and a surfeit of style, carries material consequences for these young women artists as they negotiate their own realities on the cutting edge.

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[193] See Tricia Rose, *Black Noise: Rap Music and Black Culture in Contemporary America.* Vol. 6. Hanover, NH: Wesleyan University Press, 1994.

THE GLOBAL DIRTY SOUTH

While a series of critics, blinded by the shiny surfaces of fresh hip-hop videos, dismiss the authenticity of a music based in the slick commercial present, the Dirty South brings the sounds and styles of a young, black, American South into a new global currency. On the international dance floor, Southern artists infuse the latest pop productions with the deep symbolism of the hip-hop hustler, a figure that draws as much on the historical blues boast (see Muddy Waters' "Mannish Boy" or Ike Turner's "Rocket '88") as it does the gold-chain novelty of spectacular capitalism. Commercial music television is so saturated with the trope of the Southern rap star on a boat that comedian Andy Samberg's hip-hop video send-up, "I'm on a Boat!" has come to define mainstream critical engagement with the Dirty South.[194] The deceptive simplicity of a chorus like "I'm so paid" makes an easy target for critics who dismiss the imaginative potential of the music. Meanwhile, Akon's stylized lyrics are legible to Americans and new English students alike–for many, getting *so paid* is a forever distant hope.

To this thematic complexity, add the hidden intricacies of the Southern hip-hop style: the spectacular stunts and precarious turns of Akon's video are buoyed by the quieter, confluent tides that connect hip-hop communities throughout the Global South.[195] Across the Atlantic, in Akon's Senegalese homeland, boats loom in the realities of the current generation of young people; their migrations are compelled by the grinding edge of full economic exhaustion at the bottom of world poverty statistics. For millions of young West Africans–particularly those from drought-ravaged Sahel nations–environmental disaster and poor development force young people to leave

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[194] Lonely Island, "I'm on a Boat," featuring T-Pain. On *Incredibad*, Universal Republic, 2009.

[195] Many thanks to Yana Lowry and Kelley Tatro for their helpful comments on this piece, and to Ayse Erginer and James Peacock for their valuable ideas in shaping this essay.

their communities for the possibility of informal labor abroad. As European immigration restrictions tighten, migrants trace Saharan paths to the coasts of Algeria and Morocco, where they board small fishing boats and pray for safe passage to the North Mediterranean coast.

Some manage to gain entrance to more distant destinations; communities of undocumented and documented Senegalese immigrants have been bounding in the US throughout the last two decades. They have established strong neighborhoods in New York and New Jersey, but also gain fast numbers in the urban South, where large black populations make the African presence less visually evident to immigration authorities. Atlanta, Memphis, Houston, and Raleigh all host growing communities of Senegalese flea-market traders (whom often have a special relationship to Chinese manufacturers cultivated at home), IT specialists, and taxi drivers. Those lucky enough to secure good visas can bring their wives and sisters, who work as expert hair braiders, tailors and cooks. Stateside, African migrants founded profitable domestic trade networks, Sufi worship and learning collectives, and Africana Studies departments that will network communities on either side of the Atlantic for years to come. They look to Akon, to tall Wolof NBA stars Pape Sow and DeSagana Diop, and to dozens of traveling Senegalese drum-and-dance ensembles that anchor college-town culture, as they assemble international institutions by which they survive and thrive by their very Senegalese-ness.[196] This network sounds the "thickness [of] the African present" as it extends through a Global South less visible to mainstream discourses on capitalist globalization.[197]

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[196] For an engaging study on the relationship between sport, hip-hop and transnational Senegalese and African identities, see Michael Ralph, "Crimes of History: Senegalese Soccer and the Forensics of Slavery." In Manning Marable and V. Agard-Jones Transnational Blackness: Navigating the Global Color Line. Macmillan, New York, 2008.

[197] Mbembe, "Self-Writing", 191.

As wind-whipped yachts saturate the rap videos of Southern hip-hop artists to grandiose effect, they also anchor a serious visual critique of restrictions to Black mobility in the context of regional poverty, prison, and paperlessness. The figure of a fast boat is one that crisscrosses the lives of young people across the Global South; the notion of migration is one that American citizen Akon, newly-landed African and Caribbean immigrants, African Americans struggling to find work and sustenance, and young African people hoping to survive the circumstances of global postcoloniality share. The sounds and symbols of migration serve as an index to a world of commonalities that illuminate a Globally Southern conversation grounded in the musical here and now.

A Legacy of Mobility

Akon is the son of celebrated Senegalese National Ballet percussionist Mor Thiam, who brought his drum to St. Louis in 1968 at the invitation of African American choreographer and dance anthropologist Katherine Dunham. When Négritude poet/Senegalese president Léopold Senghor invited Dunham for the first World Festival of the Negro Arts (FESMAN) in Dakar in 1966, she led the Senegalese National Ballet to remarkable accomplishment. Dunham's work in Senegal followed years of anthropological research into the culture and movement of the broader Black Atlantic, and a more subversive international tour of the early 1950s in which Dunham and her dance troupe performed a ballet, *Southland*, about American lynching for Latin American audiences. On the ground of East St. Louis, a liminal holding zone for jobless African American at the Mason-Dixon threshold of the Great Migration, Dunham, with the help of Thiam and a transnational team of musicians and dancers, brought Africa and African America into a new conversation. She, along with a broad Black Atlantic ensemble, engaged East St. Louis youth in

the world of improvisatory jazz and Diasporic dance through a series of community projects, classes, and mentorships.[198]

Drawing from a family trade in song and eloquence, Mor Thiam (with the help of jazz greats Lester Bowie and Freddie Hubbard) released a solo album integrating jazz/funk rhythms with the cadences of Mandé children's songs from home. In his movement from the Wolof talking drums of the eloquent sabar and chattering tama, Thiam pulled the melodies and cadences of speech from the Pan-African djembe and the jazz drum kit. Now situated in diaspora, Thiam keeps a familial foot firmly rooted in Dakar. With American immigration papers in hand, he, his wife and their sons have been able to alternate between work in the US and extended visits to their home communities of Senegal.

Mobility is the refrain to the Thiam family story; within the US, they continued their migrations, all the while intersecting the travels and exiles of transplanted US Southerners. From his teenage home in Jersey City, Akon recorded his first track with a group called the (Re)Fugees, a group of Haitian-American and African American artists whose work gained phenomenal international attention in the mid-nineties. For his current work, Akon's voice drips with the pixellated edges of the autotune production tool, another trademark of the Southern hip-hop aesthetic. Like his father, Akon is a stylistic world traveler. His earliest work showcased a Jamaican toasting style inspired by Brixton Londer-cum-New York hip-hop pioneer Slick Rick, while his latest hit, "Chammak Challo" is a Bollywood soundtrack send-up that reflects the longstanding Senegalese obsession with Hindi style.

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[198] Laura Checkoway, Vibe Magazine. "Akon: The Kon Artist", Vibe 15 (11); 2007, 92.

Akon's first major solo hit, "Locked Up," reached into his own experience with American ghetto life to narrate a classic trope in American reality rap: a young man resigned to a life in prison. The 2004 song from his breakthrough album on (Akon's self-owned label) Konvikt Records, *Trouble*, helped to articulate Southern hip-hop's crossover to the mainstream: a movement its artists call the "Dirty South" sound. His latest work rings with the polished synths and symbols of European dance music and fresh African club life. Akon's largest contemporary market is the global sale of his ringtones; a kind of musicality meant to signal across distant connections. Through the media of megabytes and pixels, downloads and remixes, Akon sings across a global South populated with a spectrum of belongings. Currently, the soundtrack for these unconventional movements is parsed in the heavy cadence of the Dirty South and animated by the buoyant rhythms of its ancestors' traveling drums.

OCEANS OF CULTURE

That which is lost in transit: the violence of the Transatlantic slave trade posits absence into the historical heart of the relationship between Africa and the American South. The cartography of slavery points, in a single gesture, away from homelands and, through the ugly medium of the Middle Passage, across the Atlantic. Rendered in sound, history comes in echoes: traces of African lyrics and choruses and distant remembered rhythms. Little of its original substance is retained across the historical divide between the two continents. Transit, exile and forced migrations are central and undeniable facts to global Black history; the question of how contemporary life unfolds in relationship to the event of the Middle Passage demands research that is both historically grounded and attendant to contemporary networks, migrations and strategic affinities.

Genealogies of the Transatlantic passage trace the question of loss and recovery through the cipher of origin. Studies of Black vernacular culture in the American South, focused on the question of "African survivals," often bind African-American cultural connections to this singular historical construct. Studies mine and line up texts and objects, artifacts and survivals from the African continent, into the American and Caribbean Souths and out to broader migrations. As these studies establish a map of historical movements, however, they also uncover the aesthetic practices that continue to join the Atlantic rims and their islands in between into a broader geography of exchange and collaboration that Paul Gilroy calls the Black Atlantic. The historical, ethnomusicological and anthropological studies that mine the genealogy of cultural objects, events, texts and practices of the American South are supplemented by postcolonial and Black aesthetics studies' engagement with the broader cultural complexes of diasporic connectivity across time and space. These counterpoints are brought into lively conversation in the work of critical practitioners of the contemporary popular arts.

On Cace International TV, an American public access show focused on the arts of the Black Disapora, host Fikisha Cumbo suggests to Mor Thiam, Akon's father, that the power of African communication was stripped from enslaved peoples in the New World when drums were forbidden by overseers. "But they weren't thinking, because drums still remained..." insists Thiam. "No, no, don't forget, when they took the drum out they [thought] they were safe. What about cakewalk? [Enslaved Africans] use their hands and their bodies to communicate the same thing."[199] Thiam's emphasis on sounds and practices, rather than objects or texts, foregrounds a different set of resources that those Cumbo mourns, and it compels the question of how

[199] Cace International TV show, with host Fikisha Cumbo, 1992.

contemporary thinkers on the Global South both engage its continued transnational conversations and the unique, indelible historical fact of the rupture of the Middle Passage. The conversation between the historical specificities of the American South and the perseverance of a broader contemporary Black diaspora, is in this sense, musical: contrapuntal rhythms, overlain, with moments of rupture and flows of affinity.[200] In the recent wave global pop, the latter has found new resonance.

When a male or female West African praise singer, often called a griot or jéli, recites a family genealogy, she makes choices about the shape of her representation: whether to sing the patrilineal or the matrilineal line, which forbears' names to emphasize, which lines and attributes to trace through the family's history. The thrill of this improvised articulation, for all its specificity, comes with the assurance that new representations, histories and recognitions will also find return. Genealogies come in loops and whorls; they will be recomposed and varied by other griots at the party, or at future events. They will harmonize with the praise songs that have already been sung, and each new round will emphasize the fullness of the praisee's heritage; the complexity of her self. In the New World, where the specificities of a neighbor's family lineage are obscure, masters of the musical word draw alternative lines of connection between the lives of the present and their precedent bodies.

Gilroy imagines the Black Atlantic into the figure of a sailing ship of shared practices, voices, and memories.[201] In this vision, we might also imagine Akon's sleek yacht cutting fast and jagged lines across this liner's mighty bow. While the caretakers of the liner maintain an

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[200] Nadi Edwards. "Roots, and Some Routes Not Taken." Found Object 4 (1994): 27–34.

[201] Paul Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness,* Harvard University Press, Boston, 1993, 4.

alternative to modernity based in the creative and intellectual legacies of African consciousness, they also entertain a complicated engagement with commerce and capital in the music of the Global Dirty South: a zone based less in the clean utopian than in a messy aesthetic of the here-and-now Mississippi rapper/producer David Banner describes as "horror music,"[202] and Akon calls "Konvikt Muzik."[203] An important dimension of Gilroy's Black Atlantic project involves the unmooring of the Transatlantic political economy of music from corporate control: a freedom of voice toward the reconciliation of "art and life."[204] When Akon savvily takes the prow of his Transatlantic vessel, the figure of this commercial rapper suggests the confluece of art and life in a very different register than that Gilroy describes as "communal self-development," free from commercial longings.[205] These vehicles operate in two different temporalities, but not mutually exclusive ones: the longstanding project of the Black Atlantic belonging and the temporary articulations of its many popular forms accompany each other, contrapuntally.

In the deep registers of the New Orleans second line, or its contemporary counterparts– Miami bass, Houston screwed, New Orleans trap, or Atlanta crunk–resonant drum lines sound conversations between the notion of a unified Black aesthetic and the specificity of place and time. Senegalese DJs like Gin Tess visit working cousins in Atlanta and Houston and return with stacks of underground tracks; they sound perfect under the cadences of the Wolof call-in talk/

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[202] David Banner, comments, U.S. Commerce, Trade and Consumer Protection sub-committee hearing on rap/hip hop. September 25th, 2007. Congressional Record.

[203] Konvikt Muzik is the name of Akon (Alioune Thiam) and his brother, Abdu Thiam's record label with Motown/Universal.

[204] Gilroy, *ibid.*,124.

[205] *ibid.*

music shows. Their English lyrics are crisscrossed by imaginary boats, highways and request lines; a family of modernities contained in a multiplicity of vessels.

A Women's Cypher

In the Dakar, Senegal suburb of Ginaaw Rail (a Wolof term for "across the tracks"), a group of young women gathers in a circle close to the family boombox to take turns improvising intricate freestyle rhymes. The weekly get-together draws from a hip-hop practice Americans call a cypher: a circle of creativity in which each of a series of participants takes a turn in the center. American cyphers include B-Boy breakdancing circles in the San Francisco club, street-corner rapping in rural Mississippi, and the historical cakewalks and gospel sings of the antebellum South. Culture also moves in circles in Dakar, where the sabar street dance party and the Sufi worship gathering alike center on a series of featured dancers, singers or drummers drawn from a hoop of participants. The name of the Ginaaw Rail group reflects the unity in assemblage possible with such a creative circle: "GOTAL" signifies the notion of a wholeness of differences: "In one, all."

Astou "Toussa" Gueye, the 18-year-old leader of the 9-member outfit, tells me that she has been learning more about something she and the American rappers who are her inspiration call the "Dirty South." In the course of our two years of working together to document her work and community of young people in the West African metropolis, I spent many afternoons with Toussa over local attaya mint tea. I listened as she hashed out her own artistic genealogy of hidden hip-hop histories, playlists, and styles. For all her explorations, the sound of the Dirty

South has been a sticking point for Toussa. In its folds, she finds "...our music. The dirty sound corresponds to the *sonorité Senegalaise*."[206]

Toussa explains the sonic conversation in terms of the ways the music is engaged and embodied by its audiences. "The instrumentals are like Senegalese dance pop; you can easily adapt the *mbalax* dances to [Southern hip-hop]. I adapt my same dance to both kinds of music." I have witnessed Toussa do just this at the popular Dakaroise dance party *Kool Grawoul*, at which Senegalese and Spanish expat DJs blend the Houston bass of Chamillionaire with the high mbalax pop sounds of Senegalese superstar Viviane N'Dour. Akon did the same in the spangled interiors of the lush local mbalax nightclubs during a spring 2012 visit to his homeland: the national tabloids show him stepping and rocking, Dirty-South-style, to the frenetic Senegalese pop sound based in the deep Wolof *sabar* rhythms of which his father is a master. In both musics, the hanging space between the slow anchored bass beats, filled with treble flourishes, synth echoes, and rapidly-shifting rhyme patterns, allows each listener the chance to improvise her own unique engagement with the music.

When the women of Gotal freestyle, they use the thick but loosely-woven warp and woof of Dirty South production to locate their own lyrical textures. Sister Anta, at whose home these cyphers unfold, selects a bootleg CD of hip-hop instrumentals, original vocals removed, with her brother at the local Cybercafé as the crowd gathers. In her cypher, Toussa samples from ideas and phrases from across the hip-hop diaspora, all improvised in a mixture of Wolof, French and English to a sparse backing beat she describes as "gangsta":

Ñu gaddu mic rap-ati	Let's take the mic and rap again
Tekk cadddu yu dull feyati	Say some words that will never die

[206] Skype interview with author, April 6th, 2012.

Feñ fii kenn dottu fi reñati	I show up here and no one will reign (but me)
Delloo degg ci ndiayam	I'll return the truth to [the king's] mother
Fii amul lu ñu fii leyam	Here, we won't have any excuses
Degg, kenn du ko rey-am?	Truth: no one has to be soft [with it]
Delloo ko ci catu bayyam	Bring that back to your forefathers and their juniors

The style Toussa employes here draws from Southern hip-hop in two distinct ways: first, the rhythmic play inherent in these loose beats, which regulates and inspires wordplay-in-rhyme; and secondly, the imagery of the "gangsta," whose words are a medium of battle. "I'm a killer-killer-woman," she says later in the rhyme, as she sends the insult of truth to an opponent's mother.[207]

Like the voices of American rappers who trumpet from Dakarois cell-phone speakers and the griots who emphasize the geographic origins of any particular family, the women of GOTAL represent, more than anything, who they are and where they're from. For GOTAL and their peers, the Banlieue (outer, resource-starved, suburbs of Dakar) are home; in their overcrowding, agrarian in-migration, underdevelopment, and makeshift housing, the Banlieue represent a postcolonial situation that resembles any American ghetto. In the fifty years since broad European decolonization in Africa, and one hundred fifty since the end of American chattel slavery, residents of these global ghettoes share postcolonial demographic inequality for Africans and their diaspora.

Toussa pushes her horn-rimmed wayfarers to the bridge of her nose and tucks a thick dreadlock behind her ear. She tells me that she wears her glasses in double homage to American Malcolm X and Senegalese Leopold Sédar Senghor. These leaders of politio-cultural movements

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[207] It has been interesting for this researcher to witness how the language barrier and cultural-contextual divide has filtered much of the American music complex's sexist and racist language toward Black women from Toussa's impression of "Dirty South" hip-hop while leaving, for Toussa and GOTAL, a symbolic language of "gangsta" struggle she takes to extend across the gender divide; a disengagement rarely afforded African-American women artists and fans. In Senegal, negative depictions of women in this light would be considered socially unacceptable.

based on either side of the Atlantic activated a transnational call-and-response, each of which engages the aesthetic as a realm of experimentation and political articulation: Black Nationalism and Négritude. The Dirty South, she tells me, reflects a new kind of postcolonial solidarity; a global ghetto in which the stylized musical word has special currency:

> The Dirty South of the American Ghetto and Senegal have little difference. [Residents of these places] are more lyrical...Every rapper who does well in Dakar comes from the ghetto. It's easier to tell a story about your life if you've experienced it instead of just imagined it. In downtown Dakar (the plateau) they have the possibility to find good jobs; they don't have a hard time learning about life. Us, we live in the ghetto and don't have the chance to be in the [recording] studio every day. But that cannot stop us from doing what we have to do; to push our way through. I'll say the Dirty South is our music; ours.

In the course of our conversation, I come to realize that Toussa has developed her concept of the Dirty South without familiarity with the US regional divide. The "ours" she speaks of has a membership much broader than that of a single geography. Unaware that the US houses the American South as a distinct region, Toussa defines membership in the Dirty South nation along socioeconomic, ethical, and aesthetic lines; this is an imagined community she assembles through favorite youtube videos, friend's pirated CDs, and the notions traded by her peers during their daily conversations on the hip-hop aesthetic.

One of the Wolof-language words Toussa uses to describe the Southern aesthetic is that of ngewelé, or the stylistic qualities that define the ritual work of the gewels, or griots: the casted Senegalese praise singers from whom Mor Thiam derives his birthright. The textures of the music emerge in the aesthetics of voice and movement, she says, that Southern hip-hop brings into relief. "I personally prefer a "dirty" beat with thematic lyrics; you can sell that in Senegal."[208] The creative "dirt" of which Toussa and her peers speak takes on a different form for

[208] Given the extreme prevalence of digital and cassette piracy in Senegal, rappers make negligible income from sales; to "sell" music means to win over a devoted audience.

each artist. At times, it resonates with notions of hip-hop masculine "badness"; of sonic organicness, of noise, experimentation and excess. In Toussa's work, a dirty beat is curated by her producer Mario of Def Dara studios, who uses the Fruityloops music production programs to mix retro minor-key synths, sounds of gunfire, ticking rim shots, and sudden stops and starts into the sparse, bassy backing beat. From this uneven landscape, Toussa launches her rap style, which showcases her ability to flip deftly from one rhythmic pattern to another in a style she calls "Ego Trip."

Akon's composition in sound and theme embody the marriage of the technological with the organic that brings the "dirty" into high relief: he uses the digitalized sound of the autotune production program not to alter his perfect pitch, but to highlight the subtler textures of his unmistakably clear, clean tenor and to muddy up these contours with sonic tangles. His focus here is less on production authenticity than a kind of fidelity to the ragged aesthetics of the Dirty South. Even as critics decry the pixellated edges of a sound that has become popular enough to be identified with commercial rap, Akon's fans still locate something in it uniquely theirs. The music's long vocal tones and off-kilter beats challenge listeners to step away from common-sense notions of Southernness and of the "dirty" and toward new fusions of the established and the experimental; the recognizable and strange; and the rooted and the improvisatory.

Over my years of fieldwork in the West African metropolis between 2008 and 2011, I witness the young men of Dakar trade the Yankees hats of Jay-Z and sample-based hip-hop beats for the rounded contours of the Atlanta Braves' logo and slow, bass-driven backing tracks. In the last decade, many of their older brothers and sisters have helped to establish thriving Senegalese communities throughout the Southern American cities from whence this Dirty South style

emanates. While mainstream journalists describe the Southern takeover of Billboard's urban and pop charts as a turn to manufactured, inflated, and inauthentic commercialism, the Dirty South's native audience locates within its folds the substance of the neighborhood dance floor, an unruly engagement with digital technology, and a rallying call to radical self-imagination in a style beyond the full grip of postcolonial reality: "Hey-ey-ey, I'm so paid."

A GRIOT'S POP

The luxury and the grind of the international tour is shared between African and American artists. From the center of the Skate Ranch roller rink of Raleigh, North Carolina, Senegalese *mbalax* dance-pop star Pape Ndiaye Thiopet (his self-given last name means "just a pinch [of something nice]") animates the wee hours of this early October night: a time of night the Senegalese call "suuf sedd" ("cold ground"), reserved for the play of supernatural spirits and musical performance. After a two-week tour of Harlem's Little Senegal, Atlanta, Houston and Memphis sponsored by hometown fans in diapsora, Thiopet sings from an ad-hoc stage, circled by two hundred Senegambian immigrants now stationed in outer urban neighborhoods throughout North Carolina. He's wearing a stylish outfit picked up stateside: a fitted Atlanta Braves cap, skinny jeans, a t-shirt, and jackboots, half-undone. The first half of Thiopet's three-hour set is filled with extended traditional praise songs, into which are woven sponsored verses for attendees who have shown their *teranga* (generosity) with gifts of cash. For his final set, Thiopet medlies a string of his own hits, including a pop song dedicated to Sufi saint Serigne Fallou Mbacké and his song dedicated to Dakar's hard-working tailors. He ends with his latest hit, "Rey Joxon," which gets the women of the crowd, dressed as they are in glorious, bright

robes and costume jewelry, to fill the floor with vigorous Senegalese dancing and Thiopet's palm with American dollars. For this griot, travel to the US represents the ultimate payday.

Alongside Akon, Thiopet stands as a primary influence on youth style in urban Senegal. Thiopet cuts a swanky figure across the face of West African pop as he and his crew of drummers and dancers mix the ancient cadence of the *sabar* talking drum with a decidedly American hip-hop swagger. In his 2011 hit single, "Rey Joxon" (loosely, "Caress Her until You Are Pointing Upward"), Thiopet works praises to the Sufi saints and shout-outs to sponsoring businesses into a stomping dance floor rhythm drawn from a Wolof dance ritual called *sabar,* in reference to its featured drum. References to the new American hip-hop style abound; as does a stylistic kinship to Americanness that serves to reinscribe the global cosmopolitanism for which Senegalese culture has long been recognized.

He opens the clip with an imitation of the cadence of African-American speech, assembled from a mixture of basic English and English-sounding Wolof words. "My mother play *lumbeul*, man!" His group shouts, "Yeah!" as Thiopet caricatures the tough posture of a rapper by citing his family credentials in the sexy *lembeul* backside shake. He takes it a step further: "My father play *lembeul*, man!": the dance is never performed by men; home audiences now see that Thiopet is both paying homage to American hip-hop style, and spoofing the enthusiasm with which young Senegalese men, untrained in English, affect the language for fashion's sake. As the nine-minute single heats up into a driving dance rhythm, the success of the cross-cultural conversation becomes clear: Thiopet's ritual Wolof rhythms have been infused with a Dirty South two-step swing; his rapid-fire taasú–a wandering series of stylized phrases ranging from the sexy to the prayerful–finds vocal flourishes in the rap styles of American pop as he shouts, in

Wolof: "Ker gi, man. Maa door na, Ker gi man." ("[I am] in the house, man. I hit this [music] hard in this house."). Alternating, in the clip, between the traditional griot's plentiful robes and a backwards baseball cap and Akon-inspired suitcoat, Thiopet invents a new pop style that will appeal to West African hip-hop fans and elderly Senegalese grandmothers alike.

As the song heads toward a bridge, Thiopet enters a full burlesque on Diasporic popular music; pretending to smoke a ganja cigarette, he matches the music's new, reggae-inflected rhythm: "Pape Ndiaye, look at me-see? My ancestors are American!" he sings in Wolof, throat strained with a surfeit of smoke, to the tune of Bob Marley's "Buffalo Soldier."[209] The original Marley song is a favorite in West Africa, where the lyrics about a Diasporic warrior (whom, Marley sings, was "Stolen from Africa, taken to America") meet a chantable chorus of "Wooy-yooy-yooy." The Senegalese appreciate both the rhythm of this chorus, which aligns with a favorite Wolof drum pattern, and the fact that one can sing along without speaking the original English–the term *wooy* means "cry" in Wolof. "You, you you!" shouts Thiopet in English, flipping Marley's original script and offering a new catch phrase for his fans in the Banilieue. "You-you, you you!" He points at his audience as he sings.

Like his counterparts in the US South, Thiopet hails from an agrarian capital known for its cultural rootedness. Originally from Kaolak, Senegal, Thiopet is youngest star of a griot family famous for its skill and schooling in praise singing and drumming (on his father's side) and taasú, the theatrical art of musical poetry most prominent in women's ritual; his mother is a well-respected praise singer for weddings and *ngenté* baby naming ceremonies. Thiopet's credentials as a traditional griot are impeccable. His status as a hot-selling pop star does nothing

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[209] Bob Marley, and Noel Williams, "Buffalo Soldier." On *Confrontation*, Tuff Gong/Island, 1983.

to lessen Thiopet's esteem as a master of *cossan*, the overarching term used to designate Senegalese culture, which I illustrated through the work of the griotte Soukeye in Chapter 2. Here, masters of eloquence have always been known for their travels from village to city. In the courts of the ancient Wolof kings and warriors, they blessed the front lines of battles with their words as weapons. In more recent times, their success is measured in their ability to accumulate barké: blessings, money, and political clout–gathered from the gifts of patrons worldwide–which they, in turn, redistribute to their communities in the form of feasts, community gifts and tithes to Sufi leaders.

Their appeal to a broad audience base depends on their ability to incorporate disparate materials into a stylistic whole; to unify a series of audiences in the space of a song, and to maintain freshness-of-style throughout their career (an attribute the Senegalese call *saff*, or "spice"). Key to the emerging styles of the American South and West Africa alike are traditions of eloquence that extend to the foundations of Black Atlantic culture. Across both continents, stylized practices of musical speech draw both from ancient established patterns of ritual sounding and the ever-changing contexts of creativity in the moment-at-hand. In the world of signs and symbols that is the contemporary Dirty South, the African-American conversation is so thick that the question of origins is no longer primary. This is a shared vocabulary of style by which artists throughout the diaspora build global community. Akon's own musical cosmopolitanism, we might imagine, has been shaped in the crucible of tradition and movement that have defined his father's biography. For all its hyper-modern, super-American opulence, his is a griot's pop, packed with shout-outs, dance-floor sexiness, and a surfeit of styles, all brought together in that unmistakable Wolof tenor.

GENEALOGIES OF STYLE

In the global Dirty South, artists locate a mixed genealogy that reflects a series of ongoing networks and discourses throughout the Black Atlantic. They call attention to these through the critical cultural work of different kinds of practitioners who map alternative, creative genealogies meant to accompany each other in conversation. In turn, we attend to a spectrum of engagements with the notion and motion of Blackness; differential situations of Africans and Africans-in-diaspora become articulated together in the practice of musical speech.

What hangs in the balance are resources that could be directed toward Black Atlantic creativity: the recognition of the life-affirming activity of Africans in the "African present." Here, Mbembe tells us, the contours of African practices of self-writing through modes of stylization map the dimensions of a thriving Black Atlantic in which historical interstices, musical movements, and cultural harmonics replace geographic points on a map. From rupture and absence, a Global South has managed to make and remake, place and replace, sample and remix, remember and articulate.

The shape of hip-hop's Third Coast is that of the entire Atlantic rim and all the networks that run through it. It articulates a polyhistory: the authorship inherent in moving in between self-narratives. The core aesthetics of Southernness emerge from practices Mbembe calls "African modes of self-writing," or perhaps more appropriately to this study, modes of self-sounding, articulated in style. In one, all: a global politics of Southernness is a constellation of eloquences, each with its own time and trajectory, and one to which women's art is central. Americanness and Africanness have always been bound up with each other on the grounds of the Global South, as masters of eloquence write themselves with indelible voices and rhythms that carry across

oceans. Here, the voices of modernity's others–the working migrant, the urban griot, the young women in the poor neighborhoods of Dakar–evidence the power of the musical word.

CHAPTER 5: OUMOU SOW: SENEGALESE WOMEN'S POP AND THE SPECTACLE OF AFRICAN MOBILITY

As they hold aloft photos of Pan-African leaders in a music video, sing the praises of the Sufi saints in a griot's cadence, rap for divorce rights in the latest Adidas sneakers, or kick spangled costumes into the dusty discotheque air at the city's edge, the women of contemporary Senegal line an emerging continental popular industry with the sounds of their voices and the contours of their aesthetic work. In the fifty years since independence, a series of groundbreaking women artists, widespread access to digital recording and distribution technologies, and the increased visibility of local performers through new national popular arts infrastructures have opened the pop airwaves to the sounds and styles of African women's creativity. As Africans establish competitive local popular industries that cater directly to national audience and supplant colonial culture industries reliant on North Atlantic tastes and production techniques that romanticize male (often Reggae or R'n'B pop crossover) vocalists, an abundance of women musical practitioners paves new crossover routes from their neighborhoods to national stages and airwaves. The overwhelming commercial popularity of these women performers with home audiences centers them in the spotlights of regional nightclub circuits, where they infuse their radio-friendly dance-pop productions with spectacular choreography, costuming, and collaboration with hosts of friends and artists.[210]

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[210] Acknowledgements: This study draws from two years' collaborative ethnographic fieldwork with Sow and other women artists of her generation in Dakar made possible through the UNC Center for Global Initiatives (REACH Fellowship), the UNC Graduate School and the DK Wilgus Foundation, with special thanks to Dr. Della T. Pollock, advisor; Dr. Louise Meintjes; Dr. James Peacock, and Amanda Gilvin.

In Senegal, where contemporary women's speech and song draws from the traditions of ritual narration, pedagogy, conflict mediation and political advocacy of the region's women praise-singing *griots*,[211] musical spectacle functions as the primary community medium by which the social world is negotiated and transformed. The ethical performance that is the foundation of this aesthetic work dresses itself in the trickster clothing of Senegal's women griottes and ritual dancers, and infuses the thick sensory registers of musical performance as well as its more legible poetic texts. Women performers employ elaborate dance, costuming, and signified speech and work in partnership with drumming men, dancing children, praying Sufi leaders and organizing community advocates to conduct emergent visions of national social life. This complex, improvisatory and embodied musical creativity is well-suited to postcolonial needs for political circumlocution and communal imagination, as it draws into its many folds the spectacular tension between the highly visible practices of African song and style and the hidden political and economic work they conjure; the richness of this music comes in the tension between what is in the process of being revealed and what is obscured. This study draws from two years' collaborative ethnographic work with Sow the region's preeminent musical women to engage the less visible worlds of material exchange and redistribution that texture the African pop singers' musical play to locate the materials of unconventional mobility.[212]

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[211] These bards or praise singers are called griots in much French or Pan-African literature on the subject, and are most often referred to (with some reference to the singer's ethnic group of origin) as *gewel, gawlo, laobé* and *jéli* in Senegal.

[212] Methodologies for this work, conducted in the Wolof language, involved extensive travel with Sow's entourage, frequent visits to Sow's living compound, collaboration on an emerging short documentary film, and extensive recording of Sow's performances throughout Senegal. This researcher's contributions to the multifaceted project involved work as a group photographer, occasional spokesperson for TV and radio interviews, and media coordinator for spectacles.

Contemporary mobility studies calls for attention to, to echo Greenblatt, the hidden movements of "peoples, objects, images, texts and ideas" associated with the popular arts; this study of mobility in the lives of contemporary Africans engages the routes of economic possibility, political power, and the creation of selves unbound by postcolonial structures drawn by women's musical creativity.[213] These shifting performative cartographies can be found between the broader maps and migrations of laboring African bodies.

Mobility scholarship examines the kinds of legible movements associated with conjunctural shifts in political and economic systems (such as work migration or larger shifts in socioeconomic mobilities), the forced or illicit movements of bodies and/or materials across national borders, the social mobilities of individual subjects, the transnational networks of diaspora and the increasing speed of movements of ideas through communicative media. Ethnographic attention to event, ritual, enable us to imagine less legible secondary movements of people, ideas and things associated with cultural and technical phenomena such as religious pilgrimage, digital communication, the secret mobilties of the parallel market, and veiled, remote, or dissident peoples. In all cases, mobility is associated with access to and/or restriction of different kinds of power associated with resources that lay across borders, boundaries, in guarded reserves and in conjuncture with membership, credentials, and knowledge. As the complexity of these borders, boundaries and resource reserves increases with restrictive immigration policies, population surveillance and private stockpiles of late capitalism, so does the need for complex practices of movement, negotiation, and material cultivation for resource-starved populations. Here, we pause to examine complex mobilities that require sequential

[213] See Stephen Jay Greenblatt, *Cultural Mobility: A Manifesto*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2009.

movements, circuitous routes, and the co-movement of numerous bodies through the defensive gamuts of the postcolony.

In the critical world of Senegalese women's contemporary musical practice, we locate and attend to the unseen mobilities associated with musical performance. Cultural studies of Africa draw into their complex folds the study of performative media, ritual imagination, and nuanced understandings of the everyday politics of postcolonial nations-in-global context. By extension, studies of African musical performance require an engagement with the embodied textures of the music itself: its assemblage of sound, movement, rhythm, and the interplay of sensory improvisations and ethical dimensions. In order to engage the dimensions of unregulated trade practices, capital redistribution and political imagination that articulate in the music, this essay dances with the current rise of West African women popular performing artists, who draw from longstanding local traditions in speech and song to stake increasing claims to the resources associated with pop stardom. Three generations into the rise of home-grown music industry, women artists are creating space by which their local practices find wider pop audiences. As these artists draw us into the play of club dance and pop hooks, they also invite us to mime new stylistic possibilities by which new cartographies are created. This contextual ethnographic study of the work of rising Senegalese pop star Oumou Sow in the specific context of the contemporary Senegalese conjuncture illuminates the musical practices of West African, African and Diasporic women artists by which imaginative mobility and socioeconomic transformation are possible.

VEHICULAR CHOREOGRAPHIES

Senegalese pop superstar Oumou Sow is an artist on the move; skilled and schooled in the art of pop spectacle, she earned her star as a stage dancer, video choreographer and stylist with the biggest names in African pop, from diva chanteuse Vivianne N'Dour to classic Afro-Salsa star Thione Seck. Now the boss of *Les Amazones*, her own group of dancers and musicians, Sow is center stage in the emergence of a new fusion of Diasporic poetry and Senegalese pop she calls "Rap-Mbalax." After over ten years as an entourage member and employee of Senegal's most popular singers, Sow capitalized on the name recognition she earned through her dozens of video appearances and performances to take on the artist's mantle and record her first album, *Tal Moto* ("Start your Motorcycle") in 2008. Sow is a rare example of a Senegalese pop performer who is not of the 10% of the Senegalese population who identify as griots: hereditary musicians or praise singers who crowd the Senegalese airwaves with their intense poetic and vocal textures; neither is she blessed with the spun-silk super-soprano vocal chords that ornament the complex *mbalax* (Senegalese pop) sound. Although she does not have the vocal refinement nor familial credentials to match most Senegalese chanteuses, Sow is creating a new genre niche with her undeniable rap MC skills, using the space of song to incite crowds to dance with her pithy slogans and rallying poetry.

Sow's first two videos are self-reflexive commentaries on her struggle for recognition as a performer in her own right. She secured her reputation as a recording artist with *Kanel*, the name of her village homeland in northern Senegal. In a mixture of Wolof and her ancestral Hal-Pulaar, Sow calls for the abatement of negative rumors, an omnipresent and powerful communicative medium in Senegal, with reference to the Wolof proverb: "It is easy to speak ill

of another person's child [while one only seeks to understand the motives of one's own]."[214] The song was picked up by national politician Karim Wade as he rallied for his political career amidst accusations of nepotism, misspending and election manipulation toward his increasingly unpopular father, President Abdoulaye Wade. The alliance brought attention to Sow's work while embroiling her in political controversy, and she, like many other global women pop artists, has found her self-promotional vehicle in the tension between these forces. Despite her unyielding daily work as a recording artist, choreographer, group manager and savvy businesswoman, a hefty series of critics target Sow for her lack of rigorous training in prized Senegalese vocal techniques and rumors about her artistic rivalries, political affiliations and romantic conquests abound in the chatty tabloids that stuff Senegalese newsstands. Sow, a single mother of a tween girl, remains contentedly unmarried at 30 years old, a rare choice in a culture that prizes early marriage and domestic life for women, but a common one for professional women performers, intellectuals, and other women whom have managed to find lucrative work outside the home despite the crushing national economy.

Her deceased father, Abdoulaye Sow, was well known in Senegal's highest musical circles as a freelance showbiz agent and manager; he also held the honorific post of Senior Engineer in Civil Aviation under the Wade regime. Sow praises her mother, Coumba Ngone, by name in her songs, for supporting her large family with relentless domestic work and family education. In Senegal, where individuals position themselves at a cultural nexus of ethnicity, region, religious, (usually hereditary) vocation, and generation, each of Oumou Sow's songs

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[214] In Wolof, Ngaye Jubal saye Banj dungul doomu jambuur koko yakk danga ko juurul; Xam nga danga ko jurrul: "You do your best to take the straight path, but your enemies get in your way; meanwhile, one finds it easy to speak ill of others (who try to do the same) whose circumstances one doesn't truly know."(Author's interpretive translation).

features a shout-out to the two groups she most represents: the people of her home neighborhood of Medina, Dakar, and those of Fouta-Touro, the drought-stricken region of Northern Senegal in which Sow's Hal-Pulaar ethnic group is based. Young women in Medina, many of whom spend a great deal of time in their Fouta-Touro or other rural homelands, have been particularly hard-hit by the slow economic collapse as their robust performative and artisinal labor practices devalue in the broken market. As the men and boys of their families spend their days combing the city for small informal work opportunities or board boats abroad, the women of Foura-Touro labor to produce the materials necessary to nourish their families or migrate to neighborhoods like Medina to glean small income as washer-women or domestic laborers. Sow's dancers, *Les Amazones*, are drawn mostly from the poor neighborhoods of Medina, Guediawaye, Parcelle and Pikine, where a dancer's short tour with the group pays enough to buy a month's rice for her entire household.

Her performance mode, which she calls "spectacle," is an assemblage of techniques including MC-style audience interaction, traditional praise song, drum improvisation, and group dance. As they unfold in Sow's weekly discotheque appearances, government-sponsored public stage shows and neighborhood dance parties, these diverse materials are strung together with the threads of Sow's voice and movement across the performance space, through the crowd circling the low dance floor, back to the DJ booth, next to her drummers, and standing on bandstand and bar. This dance-and-shout-centered pop spectacle was invented by Sow herself as a medium by which she could deploy her choreographic talent as a lead performer—a role previously reserved for chanteuses or chief drummers. Sow's spectacle reaches its crescendo when she deploys her best-known pop songs, usually chanted through a house mic over a pre-recorded CD. Each of

these songs calls for dancers to imagine their bodies as fast vehicles: 2008's single release and video *Tal Moto* ("Start your Motorcycle") and 2009's video-only *Decolage (Fly to Fly)* ("Take off for Flight"). For the latter performance, the Amazones emerge dressed in stewardess and pilot outfits and throw out arm-length inflatable airplanes into the audience.

Medina is internationally known for its multiethnic aesthetic robustness; the high cement batiments are covered in murals of Sufi saints and commercial products and reverberate day and night with the mingled sounds of the muzzeins' calls to prayer, celebratory drumming for weddings and baptisms, and the laughter of neighborhood women celebrating their monthly association meetings with a round of songs and dancing. Most neighborhood gatherings involve the rental and temporary mounting of an ancient French steel loudspeaker and amplifier by which these events are broadcast; *Decollage* (Fly to Fly)" is a crowd favorite for the dance parties that frame these secular events.

> When my body gets hot [and stressed], I will take off in flight. *(Take off!)*
> I am going to the airport and I will take off. *(Take off!)*
> I am looking for the plane, I will take off.
> I am starting my motorcycle with so much noise. (*Yeah, Oumou, where is your motorcycle?)*
> I am looking for the plane, I will take off. *(Take off!)*
> I have my papers in order—take off!
> I am looking for the plane, I will take off.
> I fly, you fly, we fly! *I fly, you fly, we fly!*
> Take off! Take-Take off![215]

For the duration of the song, women and children alike dance Sow's newest signature dance, rolling their hands like a wheel and then pointing upward to the sky, then drawing the first two fingers of each hand into a birdlike "V" and rocking the right hand back and forth to mimic

[215] Translation to English from Wolof and Wolofized French.

takeoff after takeoff, bouncing lightly on loose knees, and focusing on a faraway object or person pointedly with one eye as if aiming for an eventual landing. Sow uses her provocative personal style and dancer's engagement with audience to deploy her expert burlesque: standing in a sexy stewardess outfit at the back of a rocking airplane for her music video, she shouts canny lines from an English textbook in her double-tracked MC's voice, rendered in the exact tones of an eager language student: "I-fly, you-fly, we-fly! Take off!" she then instructs her listeners in a mixture of her native French and Wolof to raise their right arms, and then their left arms, and fly to fly.

The home-compound salons of Senegal, packed with close generations of women and young girls socializing after family lunch, rattles with the sounds of ancient TVs turned up too loud as the youngest members of the family mimic Sow's movements. Conducting the flow of the domestic heart of the Senegalese Diaspora, Sow delivers her full-lunged instructions from center screen, pacing curvily down the center aisle as friends pop up from the prop seats to join in the song's chorus or play a few riffs on the talking drum. For Sow, this kind of performative transformation has resulted in a lucrative international career. In constant rotation on Senegalese music television throughout 2009-10, the sensational video for "Fly to Fly" punctuates Oumou Sow's career of unconventional movement. She has traveled extensively, with months in Paris and London, a 2009 tour of the US from Washington, D.C. to Memphis, monthly visits to neighboring West African countries including Cote D'Ivoire, Mauritania, and The Gambia, and work in Holland, Belgium and Spain.

GROUNDED ECONOMIES, CIRCUMNAVIGATIONAL PRACTICES

The imaginary airline featured in Sow's video, *Air Amazon International*, traces a tricky and indirect flight path from an otherwise stolid economic situation to possibility. At present is a conjunctural crisis for West African and Sahel nations. Movement is at a premium in West Africa, where in-migration from rural areas to the region's bigger cities has stretched the urban economies beyond sustainability. Thirty years of stacking economic crises have reshaped the West African social geography into a struggling urban sprawl. Desertification and sustained national debt bring on slow famine for rural families as more young people move to Dakar to vie for spoonfuls of the shrinking GDP. They tie this survival along with little bags of dates or peanuts tied to a stick as they weave through the urban traffic jams, adding occasional ten-cent pieces to their sachets.[216] As Senegal's national infrastructure declines into disrepair, the shabby national peanut, cement, and tourism industries on which the nation relies are devastated. As chronic underdevelopment and ecological crises converge into a third decade of major urban poverty and African nations can do little to make up for the production declines brought about by ecological disaster, postcolonial capitalist exploitation and national economic mismanagement, young people must look beyond national borders for enough resources to survive.

An increasingly hungry generation, disenfranchised from corrupt fits of development and removed from village communities, seek trade opportunities, education, and employment in Western nations with surplus wealth. As this situation has become more acute since the 1980s, these European and North American nations have prohibitively tightened border control and

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[216] Ravaged by drought, the single-crop agricultural economies left behind by colonialist underdevelopment are declining throughout the Subsaharan Sahel region; in Senegal, small peanut-farming towns and semi-nomadic savannah livestock communities are collapsing into satellite suburbs of the capital city of Dakar, where young émigrés must ward off slow famine by shaking tiny incomes from passing motorists as foot merchants or sustaining little more than their own room and board as domestic servants.

immigration restrictions in order to contain this wealth. Young Senegalese people, desperate to feed their large families, are turning more often to illegal immigration: 648,600 individuals, or 12.0% of the total resident population in 2004, the vast majority of them illegal residents who may not visit their homeland to risk the illegal return trip. 11% of the Senegalese GDP is assembled from remittances home from foreign workers in Spain, Italy, France, and the US.[217] Paradoxically, young people are at once pushed into emigration to richer economies by unbounded unemployment at home—and foreign demand for cheap labor—and bound to wage and profit suppression due to their status as *illegale*, who, trapped abroad by heightening border security, must leave the crucial context of the family compound for occasional cellular calls home.

The paradox of demand for labor in the context of institutionalized lack gives rise to an ambivalence toward migration in Senegalese popular culture, which simultaneously depicts dreams of foreign mobilities (most music videos are filmed in Dakar resorts and mansions made to look like Spanish, French or Jamaican ones) and celebrates imagined local authenticities (called *cossan* in Wolof) through the depiction of traditional foodways, clothing and round grass-roof huts. As a generation of young men remain abroad to save shrinking earnings over longer amounts of time, Senegal's young women strive to manage large households without a partner or older male siblings present, and teen girls look forward to mounting responsibility. As girls come of age in this absence, they must often take on both domestic management and work outside the household. This new groundedness may account for one dimension of an overwhelming desire on the part of young Senegalese women to become airline stewardesses. As local opportunities

[217] See Anna Di Bartolomeo, Fakhoury, Tamarice and Perrin, Delphine. Migration Profile Senegal Report CARIM, July 2010.

for college graduates in Senegal wane, airline "hostessing" (an outdated French term) is becoming a competitive industry, requiring applicants to speak Wolof, French, English, and often Arabic, Spanish, and/or Portugese. The combination of stylistic glamour and access to far-flung destinations is alluring, as is the promise of an official paycheck for labor, an increasing rarity for the general population of West Africa. Even girls who will not be able to afford a college education dream of this work via their common facility with learning foreign languages.

The deep-rooted nomadic practices of many of Senegal's ethnic groups have helped to sustain life amongst these circumstances. As young Senegalese men are obliged to quietly climb rickety boats to find illegal work abroad and the region's remaining young men and women travel restlessly between their rural homelands and temporary informal work in the city, Senegalese laboring bodies complete the twisted circuits of late capitalism. These demographic relocations respond to the structural demands of parasitical Western economic crises, moving African bodies while ultimately suppressing African quality of life and access to capital. Where official routes to opportunity dry up and covert movements are decayed, guarded, blocked or otherwise unavailable, West African people manage to survive, and often thrive, on the creation of alternative material and capital networks. The most legible of these are parallel global trade networks established by Senegalese Sufi brotherhoods; the Mouride followers of 19th-Century anticolonial leader and scholar Sheikh Amadou Bamba Mbacke, for instance, use their holy capital of Touba, Senegal as an unregulated trade center as they negotiate with Chinese manufacturers to supply an (often undocumented) international network of Senegalese souvenir, electronics and clothing merchants. Women hair-braiders, tailors, merchants and laborers form a second international network that capitalizes on the international communities, incomes, and

visas the male migrants manage to collect. The remittances these migrants send home have afforded some Senegalese families access to better housing and startup capital for local business investment. When sufficient money for home cannot be gathered and national cards or other documents are inaccessible, these migrants must often stay abroad for decades despite their original hopes of returning after a few years of work.[218]

Senegalese women enact their mobilities in the more discreet registers of sound, vibration, sensation and event as the young people who remain in Senegal remap the world from their own standpoints through philosophical and practical strategies of hope and survival. In Senegal, the centrality of music to cultural practice makes popular song an ideal palette by which these future imaginaries are negotiated. While the direct economic effects of this cultural work amount to little beyond the revenue of a few tourist-friendly nightclubs and a bootleg CD network, a growing Senegalese popular culture industry infuses the nation's young creative communities with capital of other kinds. It does so through processes of political discourse and solidarity-building, capital redistribution and the co-imagination and cultivation of new performances of subjectivity through strategies of survival and tactics of assembling unconventional resources.

The first of these is a space for the crafting of generational and regional solidarity through music and its associated stylistic practices. The 1990s saw generation *Boul Falé* which

[218] My many conversations with Senegalese migrants shows that they often leave with a money-making plan in place and have plans to return after a short stint abroad; across he board, these migrants hope to return to their Senegalese homeland, where a revolving series of celebrations and rituals with extensive, tight-knit families are the basis of cultural life.

was named by pioneering Senegalese rap group Positive Black Soul.[219] While the older *Boul Falé* generation reckons with parenthood and maintains its devotion to established Sufi Islamic groups, Wade's son, Karim Wade, bolsters his own political aspirations with his name for the current generation, *Generation Concréte*.[220] Oumou Sow's parallel, ostensibly non-political *Generation Fly to Fly* is less likely to carry a political sign than to seek community solidarity in co-imagining new social circumstances for themselves and their families. For these young women, musical events often center around neighborhood, labor, artisanal, religious and political associations in which, between the strains of recorded music or at the sidelines of the drum-and-dance party, programs of social intervention (for instance, the decision to pressure the government for new sewers or to throw neighborhood support behind a particular candidate) are negotiated and implemented.[221] Sow's overt social agenda involves raising community awareness of and preventing AIDS (such as in her song, SIDA), the valuation of women's labor practices and access to gainful work, the importance of the Sufi movement of Mouridya (which champions socioeconomic independence from postcolonial influences) and the expression of personal stylistic and associational freedom within the auspices of Islam in view of the emergent influence of Islamicist austerity.

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[219] This generation was initially rallied by Senegalese pop figure and professional wrestler Tyson and saw the growth of the intertwined Mouride and Baay Fall Sufi movements and the establishment of complex global Mouride trade networks. In 2000, Boul Falé rallied to elect Senegalese president Abdoulaye Wade, whose promise of new social programs and economic growth has, for this generation, fallen flat.

[220] Referring to the material used to build the high urban apartment buildings of contemporary Dakar championed as by the president, Generation Concrete was meant to build a new, urban Dakar in step with Western modernity, culture industries and technologies

[221] A critique of marriage inequality may come in the form of a Wolof proverb that insists that all people tie their robes with two hands, leaving Allah, not the law, to decide the distribution of human rights; an oblique critique of certain forms of Islamic piety forbidding the exposure of women's legs may come in the form of a robe-flinging dance party in the middle of a busy Dakar street.

A second kind of capital cultivated through Senegalese music involves wealth redistribution across the widening economic gap between the Senegalese international business (and, by close association, political) elite and the artisanal and informal economies. Although few Senegalese artists have gathered and invested small returns from CD sales or concert tickets into the private properties of home compounds or personal recording studios, their profits come by way of networks of sponsorships, advertisements, and patrons. The patronage system of Senegal follows ancient patterns of ruler/artist relations; what was once an obligatory relationship between artisan and ruler now depends on artisinal savvy in courting and maintaining relationships with powerful individuals and associations who, in turn for a personalized lyric in an artist's song, a commercial jingle, or a performance at a political rally, help that artist secure high-paying government and/or neighborhood concert bookings, sponsor photo shoots and news articles, and secure corporate sponsorships for promotional materials, radio station payola and performances. As the artist secures resources for herself and her community, she is bound to distribute the vast majority of her income to her immediate household; her backing band and dancers; an entourage of designers, handlers and drivers; and local tailors, coiffurists, merchants, perfumiers, tailors, griots, sorcerers and other informal staff. Sow's saleswoman savvy is evident on the shoe rack of her little boutique on the ground level of her Medina apartment building, where she sells her own extra and lightly worn clothes, dance shoes (all in Sow's size of 71/2) and beauty products. Although Sow seems to move very little merchandise, the shop symbolizes the transformation of Sow's stylistic practices into economic opportunities.

A Senegalese artist's success is measured less by her consumption habits—Sow's cache fits into the suitcases stacked in her bedroom at the back of a small Medina apartment that she shares with ten members of her family–than her willingness and ability to generate *teranga,* a Wolof word for overflowing generosity and a critical value for Senegalese people. An artist literally walks down her neighborhood streets with a coin purse full of change and small bills for those who approach; in Senegalese tradition, Oumou Sow handed envelopes of money and gifts to those who attended her birthday party at Dakar's lush Serrano Theatre. While she may prefer the latest French prêt-a-porter for her video wardrobe, nearly all of the wealth she distributes in her community goes to locally-made products and services, as any community figure is bound to perform the local cultural practices of *cossan* (performances of Senegalese-ness) in order to maintain the respect of her community. The cultural value of wealth redistribution is also manifest in Sow's performance events, which entail a great deal of associated local buying, selling and the gratuitous exchange of *neexal*, the tipping practices that substitute for wages for the Senegalese informal population.

A third kind of power cultivated in the performance of emergent political/economic imagination on the part of Senegalese young people in a critical process Mbmebe calls *self-writing*: "…disparate, and often intersecting, practices through which Africans *stylize* their conduct and life [that] can account for the thickness of which the African presence is made."[222] In the case of Senegalese musical production in the lives of young women, the writing of one's self means the liberatory assemblage of creative practices through mimetic dance, expressive vocalization, the forging of new words and poetries, critical uses of aesthetics in fashion and

[222] Mbembe, "Self-Writing," 272-73. Also, "…forms and idioms [that] are mobile, reversible and unstable. Given this element of play, they cannot be reduced to a purely biological order based on blood, race or geography." Mbembe, *ibid.*, 272.

hairstyle, and the establishment of these emergent selves in relation to local community and global networks. Musical practice both allows young women to create singular selves through practices of style and enables them to map new relationships between these emergent selves and other bodies, groups and resources. As they engage the communicative practices of dance, poetry, fashion, and commerce, these women position and re-position themselves differentially to the people, objects, images, texts and ideas that are the materials of mobility. This use of the imagination—a process by which sensations of materials are connected, organized, and understood through representations—cuts across the overpowering capitalist discourses of the colonial sublime, as theorized by Brian Larkin:

> The issue of power implicit in this idea is foregrounded even more in Kant's conception of the dynamically sublime. Here the sublime is experienced not so much through a sense of absolute greatness but through the overwhelming physical powerlessness individuals feel in the face of something overpowering and terrible.[223]

The symbols, infrastructures and subjectivities that outline the overwhelming power of postcolonial modernity work by way of massive colonial buildings and statues (and fortress-like postcolonial seaside resorts and mansions), regulated roads and borders, and the prominence of representations of passivity and pathos on African people in the overwhelming specter of global economic crisis. In Senegalese women's participation in music, narratives of unconventional movement and their aesthetic performance allow women to both imagine complex new possibilities of selfhood and trace the myriad lines of flight by which an assemblage of such non-binary selves negotiates and transgresses the parasitic institutions of postcolonial reality. In the imaginary air above the streets of urban Dakar and in the underground registers of complex, circumlocutional and signified performances of self, Senegalese women map their own routes to

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[223] Larkin, *ibid.* 36.

empowerment through practices of imaginative embodiment. The flight paths that make survival possible unfurl from the postcolonial field of longing to the cadence of the Senegalese talking drums and the voice and dance of the women who are their animators; in the assemblage of musical practices that articulate in the musical spectacle, the power of imagination is materialized in complex processes of social transformation. This is the artistic work Sow describes as she insists her listeners recognize the legitimacy of her aesthetic labor in her song, *Thiowli*. Amidst the textures of her call to dance is an argument for the materiality of women's aesthetics:

> Like a carpenter or a mechanic, this art is a vocation/
> This talk is about work, because work is what will save our nation/
> If you turn around, you see how hard your mother worked/
> I bring a new fashion and a new dance to my fans—come dance with me![224]

Oumou Sow leads by example; as she circumnavigates the world using the vehicles of stylized voice, poetry, movement, the people of her community reap the benefits of her unconventional circulation. She'll teach them her dance, and, in the process, enact her pedagogy of financial independence, wealth redistribution, and liberatory imagination. As she earns, mediates commerce, shakes down and redistributes the loose change of postcolonialism, Sow locates and assembles the hidden resources by which survival is achieved and transformation is enacted.

In the swampy Dakar suburb of Medina Gounass, I witness as a woman healer and sorcerer and her family tune into her favorite evening radio show on Singer Youssou N'Dour's RFM (Radio Furtus Medias), practicing the festival season's new dances. Between calls for requests and shout-outs to favorite listeners, Sow calls in to the Wednesday-night mbalax

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[224] From Oumou Sow, "Thiowli", from *Tal Moto*, 2008, self-released by artist on cassette.

showcase from London, where she has been touring for a month, to greet her Senegalese fans and discuss her upcoming video releases. Sow's voice is perfectly clear over her London cell phone; with an MC's cadence to rival that of the station DJ, she peppers her interview with the English phrases she is practicing on her journey. A series of business and travel endeavors have kept her in London longer than planned; she has to maintain interest in the new recording projects and spectacles that will punctuate her re-entry:

"And when I touch back down in Senegal, *bing-bong! boom-boom-boom*, we will have a big party, I swear to Allah!"

THE TAASÚUKAT AND THE MC

As young Senegalese men and some women slip out of their households and into old boats or busses to international work destinations in quiet privacy, daily community life in Senegal is organized around the noisy vocal event. The Serer, Wolof, Hal-Pulaar, Lebú, Mandinke and other ethnic groups of Senegal feature the rich voices of praise-singing *griots (*called *gewels* in most of Senegal*)*, whose poetry and song draw from detailed knowledge of the lineages of neighboring families, a talent for improvisation on ancient poetry, themes and rhythms, and an ability to bring a crowd into chanting and dancing communion in the space of a few poetic bars. Although their work is widely unrepresented in Western studies of African music, West African women griots are primary vocal practitioners; their work is to infuse weddings, baby naming ceremonies, labor association meetings, parties, and daily life with improvised their improvised poetry and song. With a voice that rises above the others in the community, the griot animates the moment at hand, praising those gathered with her expertise in

bending breath, windpipe, resonance, poetry and dramatic flair. The professional griot shows her admiration for a patron or celebrant by demonstrating her willingness to spend her breath and exhaust her vocal chords, and the region's most venerable griots deploy their praises in sandpaper voices ornamented with the wizened harmonics that emerge from the rawest vocal materials.

Sow does not come from a griot family and thus is not apprenticed in women's poetic practices (called *taasu* in Senegal); however, her apartment salon is always filled with the one-one-one lessons of Sow's griot mentors, as Sow studies their techniques and memorizes their classic refrains. The *taasu* is often deployed in conjuncture with a Senegalese drum and dance event called *sabar*, in which a team of drumming griots conduct and are conducted by a circle of celebrating women who take turns in center space to create a solo dance composition. Even as cosmopolitan Senegalese youth engage the fashion, music and modes of consumption of the North Atlantic, they have reached inward, into an imagined national commonality to bring *sabar* practice back to cultural prominence. Much like the reinvigoration of ethnic language Wolof as the pan-ethnic Senegalese lingua franca since Senegal's 1960 independence, the sabar draws from a co-imagined, cosmopolitan indigenous identity to fulfill the dual functions of unifying rural Senegalese migrants to the city under a common practice of tradition-making and creating sovereign Senegalese cultural space inaccessible the colonial language and social norms.

Dance and spectacle have been primary vehicles for young women's creativity across Senegal's ethnic groups. As an embodiment of individuality, creativity, knowledge of rhythmic practices and well-honed muscle control, sabar celebrates new ways of moving and the cultivation of individuality. The various ethnic dances that converge in the modern sabar are a

source of musical play, personal style and aesthetic mastery. Sabar establishes—and allows for the reversioning of—practitioners' public selves. The best sabar dancers enact fused intellectual (creative) and muscular (technical) mastery, and the critical sabar circle is itself comprised of practitioners who are schooled to recognize this performance of spatio-temporal sophistication. As the party unfolds, drummers move from a revolving series of well-known cadences into moments of co-improvisation with individual dancers. When she begins her dance, a volunteer from the circle shows her knowledge of the rhythm at hand by rocking in a series of corresponding steps. Moving to the center of the circle to face the group of male drummers positioned at its head, the dancer begins to add extra movements and bodily punctuations of the rhythms, and the drummers become her medium as they follow her body in improvising new rhythms.

This moment of personal creativity and the enunciation of self at the height of the dancer's turn is called *jaxasé*, a Wolof term and aesthetic principle that means intermixture, confusion, cosmopolitanism, and aesthetic intensity. In the tension between the extreme muscular control necessary Senegalese vernacular dance and the sense of improvisatory flinging that marks sabar's special intensity, the boundaries between musician and dancer, determination and the moment at hand, and space and time is blurred in the ineffable loops and whirls of the dancer's improvisation. Like the drum-and-dance-solo bridge in Western R&B (and, by proximity, most global pop), the *Jaxasé* is marked by a kind of spatio-temporal bending and play, in which performing bodies and rhythms move unconventionally as they articulate their specific talents and individual alterity. The dusty Sahel ground after such a performance is a masterwork of pointelles and shuffle lines, half-submerged spangles shimmering from its new lines and

ridges, an assemblage of a hundred emergent selves articulated at this celebration of song and dance.

Senegalese youth have been enjoying a national cosmopolitan pop music genre called *mbalax* for three generations. The style, which has a stronghold on the national airwaves, finds its basis in the fusion of *taasú* and other griot praise-singing styles, sabar drums and dance, and the Pan-African cosmopolitan pop music developed by Senegalese groups Super Etoille (with Youssou N'Dour), Super Diamono and Africando, all of whom inflect their griot vocal styles with the sounds of Caribbean salsa and reggae. The independent Senegalese mbalax record industry, based in a complex national style inaccessible to (and therefore not appropriable by) foreigners unschooled in sabar and griot practices, developed in tandem with the genre. Although women artists rarely managed to negotiate recording contracts until the 1980s, women mbalax chanteuses and self-described "rappers" from traditional griot families, such as Ndella Xalas, Coumba Gawlo and Fatou Gewel managed to translate their *taasú* styles easily to the full production of polished Senegalese pop. Today, many Senegalese women *taasúkats* work as pop singers for weekend soireés and spend the rest of their time making *taasú* in service to their local communities; if a *taasúkat* registers as a generous and talented personalité in her neighborhood or town, her hometown provides her fan base as they loyally support her in her transition to the international stage. Her success brings attention and wealth back into the community as she redistributes her earnings among local artisans, dancers, musicians and neighbors.

Like the dust of the sabar dance, contemporary women's creative practices draw new cartographies upon the decaying colonial map. Oumou Sow and her Amazons are skilled and schooled in the ways of sabar. In the clip for *Tal Moto*, Oumou Sow not only rides a very shiny

motorcyle; she mimics the cycle's shape with her own body, inviting passengers to ride on her back. "Get in my moto!" she shouts as she forms her body to the shape of the cycle upon which she is balanced, inviting the observer to ride. The Amazones respond, "*Lumbeul*!" calling the name of the classic sabar burlesque in which a dancer bends at the waist and shakes her backside curves in counterpoint. The Amazones' transformation is a dangerous one; other dancers have been sentenced to weeks in jail for lewdness for performing the lembeul for male audiences in nightclubs, thus betraying the women-and-drummer-only context of sabar. As she re-choreographs the muscular dance practices of sabar in *Decolée*, Sow demonstrates the work of flying as she introduces the presence of turbulence, bouncing down the aisle of the plane in double time just as her drummers quicken, fall into tumbling polyrhythm and move into song's bridge. Like the sabar Jaxasé, this introduction of challenge is just the opportunity for the artist to show her skill in cultivating just enough controlled chaos to advance her program of self-authorship.

Sow's embodied space for women's self-writing is signified differently from the prominent (often Pan-African or global) lyrical discourses on women's history and rights in Senegalese women's pop song. A new wave of hip-hop feminist activism spearheaded by groups such as Dakar's ALIF (Liberatory Attack of the Feminist Infantry) dress their national political claims–feminist, Pan-Africanist, anti-capitalist–in the modern rhetoric of hip-hop activism and ornament them with local stylistic practices. The political work of self-described "radical" ALIF and similar women's collectives (Farafina Moussou, GOTAL) is at once philosophically and stylistically engaged with American and French hip-hop movements and articulated in the local Wolof language as practitioners make plain the political discourses of their fans, who describe

their music as "Senerap" (read: Senegalese rap). Another ethical mode of women's songwriting in Senegal fills the pop genre of *mbalax's* less confrontational poetic and aesthetic grooves. Songs dedicated to Senegalese women, usually entitled "Jiggen" ("Woman"), are a national pop staple. As regional political and economic circumstances emerge, these songs address a series of issues, each describing a contemporary problem or problems for Senegalese, African and/or Afrodiasporic women.[225] Sow's work unfolds in a third register of signification, that of embodied discourse, in which playful lyrics serve as cover for transformative social practices by which women remap reality from their own standpoints.

THE FLYING WOMEN OF POSTMODERNITY

With herself or her female driver, Adji Rama, at the wheel of her own late-model sedan, Oumou Sow and her carful of Amazones speed down new stretches of Senegalese desert road and bounce expertly over others. Superstar Sow, wrapped in a full-body Islamic Mauritanian veil —covering all but her eyes to avoid unwanted attention from fans—turns from the passenger seat and points at a laughing dancer named Astou, wedged with three others in the backseat of her car. "*Begg nga tukki rekk*!" ("You just love nothing more than a road trip!"), she says in between call on her cellphone. "*Bishmilla*," she blesses, as a voice from elsewhere asks how her trip is faring. "*Amul turbulence*!" ("No turbulence at all") she answers.

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[225] Senegalese chanteuse Coumba Gawlo's recent song "Femme Objet" informs those who misunderstand, in the language of a popular Wolof proverb, that women tie their skirts with two hands just as the men must do with their pants; only Allah, then, can judge who is the better person. "Duma femme objet," ("I will not be your [sex] object.") Gawlo sings in her video, surrounded by a chorus of women domestic workers, doctors, and schoolteachers.

Equipped with a series of vehicles at her disposal and a host of international patrons willing to arrange spectacles abroad, Oumou Sow can procure herself a ticket to any desired destination. Her pop performance, couched in a catchy colloquial mash-up of English, French and Wolof and articulated to mbalax's traditional sabar drum rhythms, manifests both Sow's cosmopolitanism, a trait admired by Senegal's culturally astute young people, and her ability to assemble these elements cohesively into the framework of *cossan*. Sow's playful cultural nomadism is anchored in a region that has always enjoyed the benefits of cyclical movement, global cultural intersections and demographic shift; in the age of digital media, Senegalese artists such as Sow pick and choose their materials of artistic assemblage from a world of signs and symbols. Sow's embodiment of pop-star specialness comes in the form of a chimera whose body forms into the shape of planes and automobiles, whose voice alternates between five or more languages, and whose imagination is always one step beyond containment. Oumou Sow's traveling, motoring, flying African woman appears in the clothing of the cosmopolitan fashonista; in her reversioned stewardess' dress for *Air Amazone International*, Sow conducts the mobilization of postcolonial imagination and enacts a pedagogy of self-writing and liberation. Oumou Sow articulates what Jean Comaroff and John Comaroff describe as occult economies:

> …are a response to a world gone awry, yet again: a world in which the only way to create real wealth seems to lie in forms of power/knowledge that transgress the conventional, the rational, the moral—thus to multiply available techniques of producing value, fair or foul.[226]

Flying figures emerge when such transgressions are imagined in the global popular consciousness, precisely at historical conjunctures doubly structured in population upheavals

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[226] Jean Comaroff, and Comaroff, John, "Millennial Capitalism: First Thought on a Second Coming." *Public Culture*, Number 2: Spring 2000. pp. 291-343, 316.

associated with war, famine, or industrialization; and the (related) emergence of new communicative media, styles and techniques. At this seam of system decay, through the fissures in the facades of sublime postcolonial systems, global archetypes of unconventional mobility both infuse Sow's cosmopolitan creativity and determine how her imagined self is engaged by her global audiences.

Historically, the airborne figure of the flying woman appears at the threshold of emergent global systems. Oumou Sow and her Amazones are not the first all-female crew to circumnavigate global economic crisis; out of the disjunctures of the Great Depression 1930s, pioneering woman pilot Amelia Earhart, after cropping her hair, sleeping in her flight jacket, an completing training by female pilot Neta Snook, organized a group of female pilots called the 99s. Earhart broke boundaries as the first woman passenger on a transatlantic flight, as a travel writer and educator of women pilots, and as a pilot bent on circumnavigation. Like Sow's, Earhart's legacy was one of critical self-promotion, product endorsements, sponsorships, spectacles and personal style as much as technical skill. She also served as a model of gender play and self-determination for the icon of the WWII-era women's workforce, Rosie the Riveter. The be-habited pop TV figure of the Flying Nun graced screens at the conjuncture of the Catholic Vatican II, hailing a new generation of faithful women who, independent of the restraints of postwar motherhood and the cloister, initiated an unprecedented series of intellectual and social justice projects.[227] Flying nanny Mary Poppins was a safe embodiment of the feminist movement for Disney audiences in the 1964 film; her character itself hailed the twilight of Victorian England, using her prim umbrella and copious leg-guarding skirts as tools of the

[227] For more on the relationship of feminist flight to modern conjuncture, see R. Sullivan, *Visual Habits: Nuns, Feminism, And American Postwar Popular Culture*. University of Toronto Press, Toronto, ON: 2005.

pedagogy of class-consciousness and symbolizing the forthcoming Edwardian women's struggle for British suffrage.

Superhero Wonder Woman (1941, WWII) had an invisible airplane and a magic lasso of truth.[228] Like Oumou Sow, Wonder Woman was a leader of a group of Amazons; in Wonder Woman's case, her homeland was peopled with fierce women warriors who worship female deities. Wonder Woman appeared at the cusp of World War II, an answer to popular anxieties over sudden new responsibilities and roles for women in society. That she and her Amazons should appear at such a disjuncture traces the periodic appearance of the Amazons across the boundaries of the unknown. Since the time of Greek antiquity, the vicious Amazons have been invoked to represent the Other; Turks, Aryans, Libyans, and to speculate on the violent possibilities of revolt by the indigenous peoples of the impenetrable rain forests of the New World.[229] Equipped with a magic girdle of strength, husbandless and removed of their right breasts to aid their poisonous archery, the Amazons represent the danger of the unknown in the North Atlantic psyche, even as they celebrate a figure model as their cartoon leader.

The flying superhero appeared with the emergence of DC comics at the threshold of World War II and manifested its most spectacular multiple forms during the Cold War. Not only can a hero such as Superman resolve the ordinary violence of Gotham, he can stave off the purveyors of world destruction. His physical might and diplomatic skill are necessary to the peaceful resolution of systemic crisis; he is a crime fighter, regulating the body social. His own

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[228] The character was invented by William Moulton Marston, a psychologist 'a new kind of superhero, one who would triumph not with fists or firepower, but with love. "Fine," said Elizabeth. "But make her a woman.'" (www.williammoultonmarston.com).

[229] "Wherever the Amazons are located by the Greeks, whether it is somewhere along the Black Sea in the distant north-east, or in Libya in the furthest south, it is always beyond the confines of the civilized world. The Amazons exist outside the range of normal human experience." Walcot, P. *Envy and the Greeks*. Aris & Phillips, Warminster, UK, 1978.

massive body is one of the spectral colonial sublime, always watching from above, always restoring order. The woman superhero Wonder Woman fought the enemies of liberty with love and pedagogy; her super power lay in her ability to inspire wonder; an imaginative step beyond the physicality of the male heroes' superhumanity. Oumou Sow, too, finds her power in the noncombative regulation and manipulation of bodies; as she warns listeners to wear their helmets when motorbiking and have their visas in order for flight, she also encourages them to join the entourage of human vehicles of their own design.

The Flying African figure emerges in situations in which violent and exploitative transnational labor practices are enacted upon the bodies of African people. The popular figure of the Flying African draws from the Pan-African oral traditions of enslaved Africans to animate contemporary literatures of the Black Diaspora. The flying African is a fugitive, carving secret paths across the threshold from Southern objecthood to Northern subjecthood. The Gullah people of the Georgia Sea Islands told of slaves whose powers of flight remained hidden until the threat of death under the overseer's whip; only at the point of reduction to pure objecthood do these Africans reveal their powers of flight, taking off to their homeland in ensemble. While airborne flight may be the most conspicuous of radical movements, the subterranean enslaved African in the Underground Railroad also enacted a program of unconventional mobility. Throughout her life, drawing on the antebellum ambiguity of her status as slave or freewoman, Harriet Tubman moved freely between Canada, Florida, the Sea Islands and New York to help to destroy the bridges, tunnels, and other infrastructures of the slave economy by organizing secret networks of spies and information, all the while carving secret new paths that could only be detected by those who understood the lexicon of escape. Tubman was nicknamed Moses for her work in bringing

enslaved people across natural and military borders of entrapment and into safety; while the biblical Moses moved the earth to part the Red Sea, Tubman cut through the institutions of slavery in plain sight while hiding their discursive existence; her teaching and communication about these possibilities of escape were concealed in plain sound–the thick strains of plantation song.[230] Failure on the part of overseers to take plantation speech and song seriously resulted in a critical breach of the system.

In Senegal, the secret powers word-and-soundcraft are the substances of sorcery and safety. Before Oumou Sow crosses the threshold of her apartment for a road trip, a family member writes a Qu'ranic verse with water on the doorjamb; like many powerful Senegalese people, Sow herself works with a number of marabouts who tie her with magical amulets of Qu'aranic verses wrapped goatskin (called *gris-gris*) and provide her with magical baths and items. The Senegalese public often attributes the kind of success Sow has enjoyed to the work of these marabouts, in combination with her own dedication to Islamic prayer and almsgiving. Unlike the witch-hunting that has accompanied invasive capitalist development in other Sub-Saharan African nations, and despite a slow current of conservative Islamicist attitudes against sorcery growing slowly in Senegal, most Senegalese people firmly regard the magical connection between global capital and artistic work as an inevitable, albeit dangerous, one.[231]

The imaginative co-articulation of powerful women, wordcraft, flight and the occult accumulation of capital is global in nature; the figure of the unidentifiable or unknowable flying

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[230] Clinton suggests that Harriet Tubman may have been allowed to go beyond women's traditional boundaries more than most women, because of her race. C. Clinton. and Silber, N. *Divided Houses: Gender and the Civil War*, Oxford University Press USA, New York, 1992, 94.

[231] Sylvia Federici, "Witch-Hunting, Globalization, and Feminist Solidarity in Africa Today," *Journal of International Women"s Studies,* Vol. 10 #1 : October 2008, 21.

Other, is both a terrifying and exhilarating one; it materializes in the encounter between the modern subject and the oriental thing.[232] The ability to posses and control such objects is primary to the human imagination and to the tropes of pop culture. Late-'70s Saturday kids' show *The Secret of Isis* features an American anthropology teacher whose contact with Egyptian artifacts endowed her with the ability to embody the flying African goddess. The flying carpet that represents wise King Solomon's quest for knowledge in some Islamic and Jewish traditions makes an easy icon for popular Western images of the mystical East. Even when in the possession of stabilizing social forces, the material nature of objects of flight and sorcery lends them to hijacking, misuse, or repossession from within as they are adopted and reversioned by Other, feminine, Third-World, or oppositional cultural practitioners.[233]

The flying carpet figures into Senegal's most celebrated example of human flight, where nearly all pop cultural practices involve the mystical dimensions of Sufi Islam, particularly the leaders of Mouridya. While imprisoned for his leadership in the peaceful formation of a national Sufi movement, in a French ship during strife between the Colonialists and various factions of the Senegalese countryside, Sheikh Amadou Bamba Mbacké (Serigne Touba) is believed to have flown from his cell to the surface of the ocean in 1903, where he conducted his daily prayer and enjoyed a glass of mint tea. His son and subsequent leader of the Sufi Mouride order, Serigne Fallou Mbacke, is said by many Mourides to have flown to and from Mecca without an airplane.[234] Mbacke's mother, Mame Diarra Bousso, was, according to her devotees, freed by

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[232] Jung points out the presence of flying objects in the popular imagination at times when humanity is particularly menaced. See Carl Jung, *Flying Saucers : A Modern Myth of Things Seen in the Skies.* Princeton University Press, Princeton, NJ, 1979.

[233] See L. Hengehold, "Witchcraft, Subjectivation and Sovereignty: Foucault in Cameroon," *Sens Public* International Journal, published online 2009/06, 2009.

[234] Oral histories recounted to the author in Dakar and Touba, Senegal, 2009-11.

divine intervention after falling into a well.[235] Oumou Sow is a devoted Mouride who does not hesitate to call upon Sufi aesthetics and practices in the midst of her spectacles. In her theatre and television gigs, her dance numbers are interspersed with praise songs for Serigne Touba and Mame Diarra Bousso, and she and her dancers often signify their affinity with Mouridya in their speech, dress and style. The foundational Sufi spiritual and aesthetic practices of Senegal celebrate the awareness and extension of the individual body into richly-woven interconnections with elements of spiritual and natural world. In the substance of this spiritual culture and the practices of daily meditation, communicative practices of signified performance, tricky movement, multi-body collaboration and sensory complexity circumvent the broadest boundaries of the colonial sublime.

AFRICAN WOMEN'S LIVES IN MUSIC AND MOTION

Oumou Sow not only envisions the transformative potential of her own musical body; she gathers the materials necessary to implement that vision through her performance of imaginative articulation. The space of an Oumou Sow spectacle is forever changed with the event; besides the spotty enforcement of admission prices of sale of CDs, participants have been shaken down for enough small change to sustain a community's needs for a full week, and to fund Sow's next operation. Flight is, by nature, fleeting; eventually, what goes up must come down. *Air Amazon International*'s next destination is the recording studio, where Sow will record her next hit, "*Bing-Bong: Atterissage,*" after the sound of the plane cabin at landing time. The Amazones have taken up their space in Sow's little salon to practice their new dance, tumbling out into the high

[235] Transcripts of these and other oral traditions available at the Ailhazar Touba website: www.alazhartouba.com.

concrete hallways in peals of laughter. In the space of excess and laughter, Sow locates the possibilities of flight, a secret wellspring of resources, and a danced language of hope.

CONCLUSION: THE ETHNOGRAPHIC SENSORIUM

In the late morning light of the Dakar harmattan spring, on the ceiling of my Medina bedroom, I watch a king's ransom of Africa Soda, pulled by a strong horse and balanced on the rickety timbers of a homemade cart, make its rounds to neighborhood boutiques. As it ambles down the straight but potholed Rue 25 toward the crowded Marse Tillen, the cart bends in half at the far corner of the room, and then turns down toward my closet to disappear in a shadow. Other vehicles take its place, only to meet the same fate: appearing, bending, expanding, and then disappearing into the shades of my dwelling. I can't figure out how these old, heavy, hand-hewn doors manage to make such a clear projection, nor how this accidental camera obscura manages to make a cross-section of the street below appear in reverse on my painted mud-brick ceiling.

When I first arrived in this open, echoey apartment on the edge of the city's toughest and most vibrant neighborhood, I couldn't make out the scene on my ceiling: a kaleidoscope of color and movement. Only as I came to know the shapes of Dakar's horse-carts, the colors of its goods, its preferred cola flavor, and the rhythms of the deliveries to the shops below, did I begin to recognize the movements and elements working through this field of vision. Without electricity for the expanse of the day, I open my bedroom doors to the sounds of the street below. The echoes of the neighborhood, now unmuffled, fill my house. Some distance from the street, I hear individual shuffling feet combine in a stratum of sound. Always, a festival somewhere in this city of sound, and always in the center, a griotte, a dancer, a laughing honoree.

The course of my ethnographic work in Dakar–about two years on the ground–has trained me to distinguish the lives and movements of individual people as they move through the *mass sonore* that is contemporary Dakar. My study sought to document the lives, voices,

movements and struggles of five Senegalese women, maters of the musical word, as they configure and deploy their own liberatory projects in music.

Njaaya Gueye, the emerging star in world music, engages the signs and symbols of Africanity experimentally, and with a vigilant ear toward the complex of discourses, audiences and resources that intersect in each of her projects. She struggles to stay ahead of the clamoring desires of producers, managers, and European connoisseurs to create on the cutting edge between what is established and what is possible. For the time, this has meant writing a host of new songs as she raises her infant in rural France, where she lives with her partner, a Senegalese designer who works in the European clothing market. She tells me that when she feels secure in her work, she plans to return her Senegal with new life to her musical career there. She will continue to fight for social reform, and to foster new movements in the Senegalese arts. From afar, Njaaya imagines a Dakar that, like the cultivated fields in her song "Dina Mégn," will one day yield nourishment.

Soukeye Dieng, the Serer griotte, travels weekly from her village in Ndangane to the crowded banlieue of Dakar. She carries with her a legacy of women's sounding practices as she contributes her singular voice to the contemporary soundscape of the city. She has married for a second time, and become a mother again, this time to a little girl. She often sings with her baby in a *mbootaye* wrap on her back, in Senegalese style, as her older boys listen from nearby city rooftops. They will learn her songs, the spices of her recipes, her style of moving through the market. They will find new ways to make this knowledge work for them, in the changing circumstances that mark the future.

Sokhna Khady Ba's work continues to crescendo. She is the most sought-after woman ritual singer in Senegal, and her events draw thousands of faithful into their folds, many of them new to a strong commitment to faith. Most importantly, she has established herself as a celebrated figure in the holy city of Touba, and the sound of her voice fills its streets at pilgrimage. Her voice seems to travel forever, in every direction, like in her dream of Cheikh Ibra Fall. Like Soukeye, Sokhna Khady carries her new infant in a *mbootaye* on her back as she sings; her family grows. Sokhna Khady calls me online to talk about the possibility of touring the US with her husband and drummers, and as I seek out that possibility, I imagine the ways in which her voice will activate new conversations between the life of Dakar and the world.

When I haven't talked with Oumou Sow for awhile, I type her name in the search bar of my internet browser and watch her latest interviews from Senegalese TV, footage from the sabars thrown in her honor, and homemade videos of her presenting her latest skin cream or clothing boutique. Many of these involve her presentation of a "new style" upon which she will capitalize: a cherry-red mohawk, a rainbow color scheme, an exaggerated dance move. She visits the US and Europe yearly, sometimes performing a song or two at a nightclub run by Africans-in-diaspora, sometimes dancing at a cultural wedding or teaching classes. She practices her english in faith that her American travels will bring her financial security. She will import new styles to Dakarois milieu: hair extensions from Atlanta, white boots from the London street style, a Parisian print jacket. After these have made their appearance on the afternoon Senegalese talk shows, they will be sold secondhand at her little boutique in Medina.

Each of these artists' trajectories continues to unfold as she develops new projects that resonate with the emerging social and cultural circumstances to which her voice is attuned. For

Soukeye, Sokhna Khady and Njaaya, the rhythms of motherhood have interwoven with this artistic path. Oumou Sow's tween daughter aspires to enter the University of Cheikh Anta Diop to study English so that she can one day become a *hostess del'air* and fly around the world. For the young women who came of age in "Generation Fly to Fly"–the era in which Oumou Sow defines a new women's mobility through music–the musical word is the route to global travel, economic possibility, and political transformation.

Toussa, whom I first encountered at her high school talent show in Guediawaye in 2009, has her whole career ahead of her. She is preparing for a tour of the US with the US State Department-sponsored OneBeat program. She will tour the eastern US with collaborating artists from around the world to learn about professional development, working with venues, live instrumentation, and the US music industry. She has learned from the careers of the other women in this study, whom she admires. She tells me that she wants to remain an independent artist, and that rather than pose as a bobo chanteuse, a dancehall diva, or another figure of postcolonial desire, she will focus on honing her poetic craft, her vocal technique, and her language skills. She is in school for video production and is studying audio production in hopes that she can one day build a women's recording studio in Dakar, where she will train other women to produce and distribute their own music and manage their own careers.

I have witnessed as each of these women develops her own liberatory project in the medium of the musical word. Each of these takes a very different shape, a unique style, a specific set of literatures, contexts, and audiences. At the same time, each of these projects is unmistakably Dakarois, and each resonates with the others: Soukeye and her friends in Ndangane deeply identified with the story of the servant in Njaaya's *Mbindan* video, Toussa met with

Oumou Sow to ask her about how she manages her own career, Soukeye and Oumou Sow attend Baay Fall *dahiras* at which Sokhna Khady Ba conducts worship with her voice. They assemble in overlapping fields, like the neighborhoods that coalesce in the city, and connect in sonic interstices: a phonographic map of vocal relations, intertwined. Their affinities emerge in a culture of co-resonance, nourished by a nation that recognizes the power that lies in the musical word.

APPENDIX 1

Transcription and translation, Njaaya: "Mbindan," self-released, 2008

Man dekk ba laa jogge man	*I came from my rural village*
Wacc si ngir daan sama dolé	*I am coming here for hard work*
Ngala bul ma door té bul ma sagg man	*So please don't hit or curse me*
Ngala bul ma def nii jaam	*Please don't do me like a slave*
Tanta nit donc la doon	*Auntie, I am a human*
Damay liggey nguir dundal sa ndaay ak sa baay	*I am working because I need to feed my mother and father*
Maay ki togg bammu saff tebu lekk jotté nguen berma	*I am the one who cooks tasty food but I must eat apart from you*
Maay ki foot di passé nguen di saynse di ma dingat	*I am the one who washes and irons your fashions, but you tell me I am unworthy*
Tonton, man maay fowe kayam	*For uncle, I am a plaything*
Bes bu nekk mu taas samay sir ba noppee naan man	*Every day, he unties my skirts* *until he is done , then he tells me:*
Bu jip ma daqq la ci biti	*If he hears [that I told], he'll throw me out*
Woooy oooh wooy wooy wooy,	*Cry, cry, cry…*
Wooy wooy wooy, oooh, wooy wooy wooy	
Ku jox lu ko neex def ma	*People do whatever they want to me*
Bu ma fippoo ngeen sot ma	*If I throw you off, you overcome me*
Lu reer ngeen jiñ ma	*If something is lost, you accuse me*
Kenn joxul ma cur ci ker gi	*No one gives me respect in this house*
Bu ginaar sabbé lay jokk man	*Of the rooster's call I wake myself*
Duma noppaliku ba jant soh	*I will not rest until the sunset*
Juroomi weer kenn feyul ma	*Five months, no one has paid me*
Ñemewuma lajjee	*But I do not dare to ask for it*
Né bu booba ngeen janima	*You tell me to shut up*
Né bu booba ngeen chipatuma	*You click your tongue at me*
Tanta def ma ni say doom	*Auntie, do me like one of your children*
Tanta def ma ni say doom	*Auntie, do me like one of your children*
(Refrain)	
Buma gentoon lii ca njalbeen	*If I had dreamed this from the start*
kon tey sa maay rangoon du guenn	*Then today, my tears would not fall*
wane jamm ak pekken yallak doogalem	*But a person thinks, while Allah decides*
bu doon am naa doogalem looy yek sax	*If I had the decision, what you feel*
Ma nee njuumté dong la tanta	*I say, you have committed a wrong*
Nga def ma nii nga def say doom	*You will do me like one of your children*
Ma jël laa def la yaay	*I will treat you like a mother*
Waañe deedeet sagarul mbindan la doom	*But no, don't curse your daughter the servant*
Yallowuma lu baax	*I do not have the right to have goodness*
Dangay def ni jamm	*You will do me like a slave*

Tanta def ma ni say doom	*Auntie, do me like one of your children*
Tanta nit donga la doon	*I am only human*
(Refrain)	

APPENDIX 2:

Senegalese Hip-Hop
Entry for the Cambridge Companion to Hip-Hop, forthcoming.
Authored by Ali Colleen Neff

Hip-hop in Senegal manifests the longstanding conversation between African practitioners and the arts of the Black Diaspora in a complex of practices, modes, and media. The streets of the Senegalese capital of Dakar and its populous *banlieue* suburbs are thick with hip-hop practices that reflect ideas about Americanness, global resistance, and the politics of style. Evolutionary narratives suggest that African hip-hop began with the initial introduction of rap recordings to the continent, moved subsequently into a long imitation phase, and were eventually adopted by Africans. Through this lens, African innovation represents the endpoint of hip-hop's trajectory, and non-westerners, its latecomers. Senegalese hip-hop, however, shows that global hip-hop is part of an ongoing poetic, sonic, and stylistic dialogue between Africa and the North Atlantic that unfolds through multiple historical lines and overlapping genealogies. The richness and polyvalence of hip-hop in Senegal is a result of the historical infusion of New World creativity with African poetic and vocal traditions, the transatlantic rhetorics of the Civil Rights, Négritude, and Black Power movements, and the circulation of global popular music throughout the 20th and 21st Centuries.

Today, hip-hop is a national discourse in Senegal as young people continue to debate and reinvent hip-hop styles, which they call "Galsen," (from "Senegal"), or "Senerap." The body of Senegalese hip-hop speaks at once to national politics, to international youth solidarity, and to a passion for Sufi Islam, to which 96% of the Senegalese population adheres. It is deployed in an assemblage of languages, from the colonial French to Arabic-inflected indigenous languages

Wolof and Pulaar to, less often, English. Much of the hip-hop that enters global venues is Francophone, while local hip-hop stars most often rap in Wolof, a language suited to rapid-fire cadences. Themes of Pan-Africanism, Third-World solidarity, and a global hustle by which Africans can survive and thrive remain common across Senegal's many hip-hop styles, from its foundational sample-based productions of the '90s to its current 808 chants, dance-pop fusions, and Afro-folk iterations.

A study of hip-hop in Senegal requires attention to the longstanding role of the regional griot, or praise singer, who is part of a family line of musicians. Across Senegambian ethnic groups, griots specialize in drum or kora, dance, and the craft of musical poetry, which they employ to resolve community conflicts, empower or remove leaders, convey news, and to recite the genealogies of their neighbors. Men and women griots have for millennia recited improvised and memorized verses over the rhythms of talking drums for the purposes of life-cycle ritual, diplomacy, and battle. These traditions of eloquence set the stage for contemporary hip-hop styles, which draw on these practices of collaborative ritual musicmaking, and a number of Senegalese rappers are themselves from griot families.

Owing to the legacy of the griots, the calls of the Islamic *muzzeins* at prayertime, and the open use of rented ad-hoc soundsystems for ritual, celebration, and religious oratory, Dakar is a thriving community in sound that quickly integrates new global sounds and styles. Another important influence in the contemporary Senegalese culture is that of Sufi Islam, to which 96% of Senegalese ascribe. The devotional poetry and public chants, or *zikr*, of Senegalese Sufism involve improvised, impassioned verse that infuse the poetic practices of the region and nourish the worldviews and lyrics of many prominent Senegalese rappers.

Given the traditional importance of migration to economic systems of this Sahelian savannah region, most Senegalese people speak a handful of languages. While some formally educated Senegalese speak the colonial French or Arabic learned in Qur'anic school, Wolof is the Senegambian *lingua franca* shared across regional ethnic groups as they meet in the cultural crossroads of Dakar. Non-Wolof Senegambians tend also to speak their own ethic languages and those of the nations in which they work and trade. The location of the small former British colony of The Gambia within the boundaries of Senegal infuses Senegalese Wolof with English phrases even as it is a lesser-spoken language in this largely Francophone part of the African continent. In turn, Senegalese hip-hop has to date been more directly influenced by the cadence, style, and production values of American hip-hop than its lyrics. The Wolof language, which involves long strings of phonemic prefixes and suffixes which are easily suited to quick syncopation and rhyme, lends itself to improvised verses by which the Senegalese developed their own hip-hop lexicon mixed with English choruses and phrases. The additional influence of French and Islamic hip-hop have added further complexity to Galsen's polyvalent lyrics. Tupac Shakur, Public Enemy, the Fugees, Wu-Tang Clan, Busta Rhymes, Fifty Cent, and Wiz Kalifa are amongst the American acts whose sounds, lyrical themes, and (sometimes) Islamic names resonate with young people in Senegal.

Young Senegalese people witnessed the emerging hip-hop movement in the 1980s when a devastating national drought led them to seek work *en masse* in Europe and the US. As they immersed themselves in the international neighborhoods of New York City's outer boroughs and the struggling Parisian *banlieue*, they found polyrhythms, dance, and poetic styles that resonated with the their community lives back home. These musical practices, already deeply influenced by

the historical creativity of enslaved Senegambian peoples in the new world, spoke both to shared histories and an emerging global hip-hop solidarity.

Early Senegalese hip-hop, in turn, incorporated sounds and styles popular in both the US and in the growing European scene, infused them with themes of African migration and struggle, and breathed regional aesthetics into their sonic structures. The result was a spectrum of hip-hop practices, from streetside freestyle battles, to the incorporation of breakdance moves into traditional dace celebrations, to a thriving recording industry. Each of these represents one of many strains of Senegalese hip-hop that resonates variously with global movements and contributes to discourses on what hip-hop means to young people worldwide.

Even as the thickness of African and American cultural conversation, the efforts of particular Senegalese leaders have helped establish national acts and the whole of African hip-hop on the international hip-hop scene. Senegal's most active early group, Positive Black Soul (PBS) was led by Didier Awadi and Duggy Tee, who remain active in the Senegalese scene today. Afro-French hip-hop pioneer MC Solaar fostered the group as a member of the Francophone African diaspora; these kinds of transnational partnerships characterize Senegalese hip-hop's circuits of mobility today. Along with Daara J and Pee Frois (Xuman), PBS pioneered the three-vocalist sound that characterized Senegalese hip-hop in the 1990s: an American-style rapper, a reggae MC whose style is inflected with Jamaican patois, and a chanteur, or singer, who leads the chorus. Women's collective ALIF drew from this model in forming the first internationally recognized female African hip-hop crew at the turn of the 21st Century. This style has largely phased into larger collectives and solo acts in the 2000s as global trends move away

from sample-based and roots reggae sounds and into a more heavily synthesized club/electronica aesthetic.

Like its North and West African neighbors, Senegalese music has always engaged with global movements in popular music. Senegalese soldiers returned from the World Wars with French, Cuban, Spanish, and American records in hand. These contributed to *mbalax*, the national popular music of Senegal, which fuses Afro-Caribbean instrumentation with vocal riffs drawn from the songs of the griots. While Galsen often draws from the styles and dance-floor orientation of *mbalax* pop, many Senegalese artists define their work in opposition to the genre's mainstream, regional, and gender-participatory orientations. Galsen also overlaps with a longstanding regional reggae scene inspired by Bob Marley and South African artist Lucky Dubé, and current global fashion, to which the Senegalese–traders, performers, craftspeople, and exporters, are keenly attuned. Gokh-Bi System and Fafadi are amongst artists who identify with Galsen but who heavily use live reggae instrumentation. Fusion artists including rapper Fata and chanteuse Vivian N'Dour mine mbalax for hip-hop and R'n'B inspiration; even as mbalax artist Pape Ndiaye Thiopet infuses his taasú, or toasting rhymes drawn from women ritual griottes, with hip-hop phrasing and posture.

R'n'B took early Senegalese root with Smokey Robinson, Marvin Gaye, Michael Jackson, Sadé, and Lionel Ritchie amongst regional favorites. The booming West African metropolis of Dakar itself is an urban crossroads in which critical young practitioners engage and remake cutting-edge global styles. Senegalese migrants thicken African-American networks as workers circulate from home to factory, IT, taxi driving, and informal work in Atlanta, Memphis, Raleigh, and Washington DC. As a largely Islamic nation with longstanding trade ties with the

Arab World, the Senegalese are well-versed in global religious and political movements. Writers and filmmakers including Miriama Ba and Ousmane Sembené, and intellectuals Léopold Senghor and Cheikh Anta Diop put European and American intellectual movements into conversation with Afrocentric worldviews and politics. Within this long context of Afro-modernity, Senegalese hip-hop renews the dialogue between critical West African creativity and mass global culture. Sites of hip-hop creativity in Dakar include the Instituit Culturel Francais, the British Council, and events presented by the US State Department and (independent American event and documentary producers) Nomadic Wax.

For many young nationals, Atlanta-based rapper Akon is the most prominent icon in Senegalese hip-hop. His father, international jazz drummer Mor Thiam, hails from a famous Dakar griot family and emigrated to the US to work with dance anthropologist Katherine Dunham for various jazz projects. Akon's clear sung tenor and pared-down lyrics appeal to the Senegalese who recognize his griot's style and for whom English is a less-spoken language. They respond, in the wake of mass emigration for young men, to images of mobility and self-sufficiency in his videos. His music translates well to the Senegalese club or street dance, where it is most often deployed next to mbalax hits and international pop as young men mimic his tie-and-tailored-cardigan Atlanta street style. Akon's status as a mainstream rapper speaks more toward global migrations of hip-hop and griot culture than it does to the direct influence of hip-hop's germinal Bronx scene of the late 1970s. His work articulates a special facet of the Africa-US hip-hop conversation that becomes evident through an inclusive notion of hip-hop practice based less on English-language lyrical complexity and more on the notions of Afro-modern

musical conversation and community. Akon and his family maintain a household in Dakar, returning regularly to hold free concerts and fund humanitarian work.

Many of Galsen's earliest touring artists hailed from the central Dakar regions of SICAP or "the Plateau," rare middle-class neighborhoods where, in the 1980s and '90s, young people were more likely to possess the resources of formal education and international mobility than their suburban peers. They were able to rap in French and English, and to obtain educational or artists' visas to tour these regions and further establish their spokespersonship. Today, Fou Malade of Guediawaye, Matador of Pikine, and Gaston of Parcelles are leading artists of the outer Dakar region, while Keur Gi Crew represent the inland region of Kaolak. These artists hail from neighborhoods thick with ritual drumming and speech events and draw from classic proverbs and cadences from "deep Wolof" speech. Often, these artists have a family member or close friend working in the outer neighborhoods of Southern US or minor European cities, and their sound reflects the club and lyrical aesthetics of those communities. Woman artist Sister Fa, whose cosmopolitan hip-hop is inflected with the buoyant song of her Djola people, hails from the southern Senegalese region of the Casamance; her style has a reggae accent that reflects her community's preferred sound. Galsen artists such as Nix identify more heavily from Akon's US "Dirty South" and reality-based (or "gangsta") hip-hop than the classic '90s era, and are more likely to record entire songs in English.

The political dimension of Senegalese hip-hop is often cited in world news reports. Awadi helped to lead a youth movement called *Boul Fallé* ("don't care"), along with professional wrestler Tyson, that demanded political answers to an increasingly disenfranchised migrant youth population. Senegalese historians and world journalistic reports credit the 2012

regime change in Senegal, which ushered unpopular president Abdoulaye Wade from his seat, to the hip-hop centered *Y'en a Mare* ("fed up") movement. The World Social Forum was held in Dakar in 2010 and involved a number of Senegalese rappers, many of whom springboarded into participation in the FESMAN World Festival of Black Arts, held in Dakar later that year. Both events offered international exposure to grassroots, Wolof-speaking hip-hop acts who have since started touring internationally. In 2012, rappers Xuman and Keyti initiated a series of TV spots entitled "Journal Rappé," a hip-hop satire on national and international politics set to music.

Given the traditional ritual and political importance of women musical poets in the Senegambia region, women's participation in Senegalese hip-hop culture has been steady, if not always publicly visible. Senegalese women's collective ALIF (Attaque libératoire de l'infanterie féministe) staged a feminist intervention into African hip-hop beginning with their work with Awadi's group in the early 2000s. Miryam (ALIF) Diallo and Njaaya (Gueye) continue to work as multimedia solo artists and have inspired a number of emerging women artists and collectives, including Sister Coumbis Cissokho (of a Dakar-based Mandé griot family) and Toussa, who participate in an active women's hip-hop collective called GOTAL. Sister Fa regularly tours the region to promote awareness of women's rights. Women radio personalities and pop recording artists infuse their styles with hip-hop. These artists work in conversation with French feminist artists such as Diam's and Americans Missy Elliot, Lauryn Hill, and Nikki Minaj to imagine space for less-often-seen figures in hip-hop.

The Senegalese hip-hop industry remains largely homegrown. The omnipresence of live music and nationalized TV and radio programs for Senegalese music translate to a low demand for high-quality recordings and officially-released CDs. As album sales are further compromised

in the bootleg cassette market (often sold to taxi drivers) and the sharing of MP3 catalogs via cell phone sim cards, local artists focus their promotional efforts on hip-hop showcases in which a lineup ranges from three to dozens of artists. One of the challenges to Senegalese hip-hop is the need for production resources for independent artists. Strict national import-substitution policies make foreign equipment scarce and expensive. The lack of access to production software and training contribute to this difficulty. Many artists resort to downloading unlicensed beats from websites or to using very basic software to produce beats. Awadi's *Studio Sankara* and Gaston's *Studio Def Dara* are amongst a handful of Senegalese studios at which upcoming artists can pay to have a song recorded at the rate of US $60 per song; other studios require that their recording artists sign over rights to songs or management in exchange for productions. Many artists work with European and American producers for songs, albums and videos.

Hip-hop is manifest in a number of registers, from graffiti to dance. The yearly Kaay Fecc ("Come Dance") festival evidences Senegalese innovation and play with hip-hop dance forms. The Dakarois smurfing scene, inspired by French versions of American hip-hop dance, has infused club dance styles in the city for two decades. Today, many young Dakarois people practice breakdance in the soft silt of the Dakar beaches and in national group dance competitions, alongside dances taken from bhangra, salsa, and global dancehall bass. Freestyle hip-hop flourishes in the outer Senegalese suburbs of Ginaaw Rail, Thiaroye and Rufisqe, where young people gather around boom boxes to improvise rhymes in the rapid-fire cadences of Wolof and mixed with French, English, and Arabic phrases. Venues like Pikine's Cafeteria host evening-long freestyle battles. Young Senegalese practitioners, already skilled and schooled in the deployment of the poetic word, activate regional culture to converse with hip-hop forms. The

monthly Kool Grawoul party at a downtown beach features DJs from around the world, mixing hip-hop from the Dakar plateau with French and Arabic-language rap, Tupac Shakur, zouk, kwaito, and mbalax. Bidew Bou Bess and Carlou D use the hip-hop form to declare their faith to the Sufi Islamic orders to which they are devotees.

As hip-hop practitioners, academics and fans debate the core aesthetics and boundaries that define the genre as an international cultural formation, Senegalese hip-hop demonstrates the polyvalence of hip-hop forms. The 72h hip-hop festival, which was first held at the public obelisque near the hip-hop heavy Medina neighborhood in December 2009, offers a yearly, three-day showcase of Senegalese hip-hop acts. A number of discourses surrounding hip-hop authenticity have arisen in the wake of this event, which is largely influenced by contemporary American styles. Like their global counterparts, young Senegalese activate hip-hop to think through the connectivity of the African diaspora, the politics of the political stage and of the dancefloor, and the creative future of Third World youth. The Senegalese hip-hop community is keenly aware of the importance of its own representation in global discourses. To this end, Senegalese artists and cultural such as Keyti are filming documentaries about the scene, and Senegalese national television is heavy with hip-hop programming.

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APPENDIX 3:

Close to the Edge

"In One, All": Senegalese Women Freestyle Artists Unify the Global Ghetto

By Ali Colleen Neff on November 6, 2011

As plenty of proud nostalgic discourses locate the residues of hip-hop culture circling the drains of sample exhaustion, scene fatigue, patched-in cameos, or the same old cushy R'n'B, people world over just keep going about inventing new worlds of musical talk in deep conversation with the hip-hop movement. Call it what they will; the global rap styles that saturate youth culture show no signs of grounding. In Africa, hip-hop traces a host of genealogies that bounce back through, tangle with, and circumnavigate narratives of a New York genesis. Africans were B-Boying and B-Girling right along with us in the '70s and '80s; they shaved asymmetrical fades in the baggy '90s; they doubled styles into backpack-introspection and true crunk at the outset of the oughts, and then multiplied into today's spectrum of sounds and styles that thrive in conversation with all of hip-hop's classic elements. Sujatha Fernandes speaks to this diffusion in her chronicle of hip-hop's many trajectories, *Close to the Edge*, even as she points to processes of gathering, collection and articulation that weave diversity into a common global project.

Looping and doubling back: northern hip-hop found many of its best artists in African and Diasporic migrants. Today, American producers mine the thickness of Afro-funk and talking drums at the genre's rhythming wellspring. Subsaharan drummers, Brixton dancers and the Caribbean purveyors of the Bronx's original style sunk their prints into the genre's forming body;

fresh cadences and brilliant remixes inspire the best contemporary global artists to sound ahead. Black Atlantic artists circulate throughout the global "Dirty South" in antiphony to the East Coast's sample-driven style. African hip-hop's latest instantiation comes with a thick dollop of history and hip-hop sociology courtesy of the work of public hip-hop scholars as distributed over the web and through readily-available TV "History of..." documentaries. With serious respect for the innovations of the American schools, African artists engage local traditions of musical speech: women's ritual poetics (taasú), collaborative song, rhythms of self-identification and praise, and an economy of eloquence to position themselves at the forefront of hip-hop futurity.

The genre's newest sounds unfold in the dusty banlieue (outer suburbs) of Dakar, where a group of young women rappers who call themselves GOTAL Connexion (From the Pulaar term for "unity") imbibe global hip-hop history and infuse their verse with a thick, self-described, "gangsta" accent. Ever-renewing, ever generous hip-hop unfolds on the shifting Senegalese ground it calls home. In the community of Ginaaw Rail (the name means "across the rail tracks"), this resource-starved community ground is crisscrossed by open sewers and urban pollution. Its dusty surface is packed by the feet of its young people, who walk themselves to any work they can find during the day and visit their neighbors and build community at night. Here, the women of GOTAL meet at member Anta's house to practice their freestyle licks as she, her brothers and her neighbors gather around the boombox to improvise over found beats.

The organizer and elected president of the group, Toussa, has just recorded her first solo studio single with rapper/producer Gaston of Def Dara Studios in the close Dakar outskirt of *Parcelles Assenies*. She calls her rap style (and song) here "Ego Trip"--a kind of hip-hop self-

introduction and declaration of a new personal style--and kerned some complex Wolof-language phrases (with a sprinkling of French and English peppered in) for her debut:

Toussa by Ethnolyrical /div>

I've been working with Toussa since I saw her perform a Wolof-English hybrid rhyme at her high school talent show in May 2009, and I've seen her grow into her own wiser-than-her-19-years rap persona, complete with prescription "Leopold Senghor" Raybans and a notebook of lyrics always in hand. She's always studying new sounds in American rap, sitting at my laptop for hours checking out Swisha House-style Houston rap and its Dirty South counterparts, Bronx-Era Old-School, Bay Area underground. She asks me about the history of R'n'B and why Southern rappers prefer to use their voices for sonic dimension instead of the big city's spitfire lyrical complexity. We discuss the ways Senegalese artists use American English to express themselves and trace the ways in which some of these words and styles change context in the transcontinental milieu.

In the two years since I first met her, Toussa has grown from the "little sister"' voice on the guys' recordings to writing and recording her own songs with professional producers, including Rapper Gaston and producer Mario of Def Dara Productions. In order to make space for her voice and vision in the testosterone-heavy Senegalese hip-hop industry, Toussa and a few of her contemporary young women upstarts formed a group of their own as an umbrella by which they could organize together while branching into their own projects. The budding group of Dakaroise women, GOTAL Connexion (from the Pulaar word for "unity"), started with Toussa, freestyle talent Anta from Ginaaw Rail and Zeyna from Pikine. In the last year, their numbers have grown to eleven, including self-described "gangsta" Sister Dia, radio personality

Sister Kia, singer-songwriter Tabú and Thiaroye personality Sista LB of the Fippu Clan. Following pioneering Senegalese all-woman hip-hop crews ALIF and Farafina Mousso, the group both makes space for women in global hip-hop and centers many of their lyrics on political and economic issues of concern to African women. Their far-ranging conscientiousness, however, doesn't get in the way of their ability to talk about the specificities of who they are and where they're from as they write themselves and their communities into the center of the emerging African hip-hop movement: one that circumvents notions of the hybridization, indigenization, or importation of Westernness by demonstrating the presence of an interior wellspring of style from within a realm of practice Senegalese rappers call "Africanity." Within their collective framework, each member of GOTAL calls for her own unique vision of a future for African women, for herself, and for the possibilities of hip-hop as a space for radical self-invention amidst a world of cultural conversation.

This is a recording of GOTAL performing their song is "Hey Jiggen," ('Hey Women"), and it functions as a kind of anthem for the group, balancing out each member's own unique hard-hitting style with an original classic beat from Gaston and Mario at Def Dara studios. The lyrics to this song are a collaboration between all of the women. The chorus is translated from the Wolof to the English like this:

"Hey Jiggen, Hey Damay Wax la/Baayleen lo xonte bi/goor-goorlu ci reew mi."

"Hey women/Hey, I an telling you/Leave your confusion/And find strength to move forward with this nation."

Rapper Zeyna tells me she is the American of the group, and she matches her East-Coast fashion sense with a brilliant Wolof/English lyrical hybrid that makes for original concepts and

an inimitable rhythmic flow. Her song below, "Waxtu Wi Jot" ("The Time is Now"), contains her artistic philosophy, as well as a stylistic declaration: her delivery on the mic is incredibly inventive, and her flow shows the complexity of her Wolof-English lyrical hybrid and an intensive engagement with the off-kilter beat.

Sister Coumbis is an upcoming mover and shaker in African hip-hop who comes from an accomplished family of Jélis, or Bambara (Mandé) griots known for their praise songs and expertise with the kora. She has been gaining international attention with her two videos from 2011, which feature strong social messages relating to children and women in poverty.

Sister Dia is one of the members of the group who claim gewel, or Wolof griot, heritage, and the strength of her voice and rallying originality of her lyrics highlight her talent as an expert in traditional rhythm and rhyme.

And Sister Anta, whose family hosts the weekly freestyle sessions in Ginaaw Rail, collaborates with her brothers and neighbors on homemade recordings that engage the concept of a "ghetto" that connects the contexts of racialized American struggle and the socioeconomic circumstances of the African postcolony.

For more on this group and Senegalese traditions of eloquence, visit my multimedia website.

A link to a photo slideshow of GOTAL by the author.

Top image of Toussa provided by the author.

Tags: Close to the Edge, Hip hop

APPENDIX 4

Planet of Sound: Senegalese Voices and Global Media Technologies

Anthropology Talk, delivered at the College of William and Mary, April 18th, 2013

From the phenomenal popularity of the Fela Kuti musical on Broadway to the current fashion omnipresence of African waxcloth prints and Massai beadwork, African creativity is a wellspring for new global sounds and styles. Digital media cut fast pathways across deserts, oceans and seas, and make representations of Africa and Africanness ever-available to global popular inspiration.

Sensational youtube documentaries like those made by Vice Magazine about Liberian violence, or viral social media campaigns like the one claiming to raise funds to oust Ugandan warlord Joseph Kony, use digital multimedia to represent distant ways of living. Globalization studies ask how emerging media technologies--film, internet, social media--remake and "plug in" the cultures they touch.

Meanwhile, the work of cultural anthropology in Africa involves a methodology we call ethnography--or "writing culture." We challenge ourselves to both think critically about how we place ourselves in the cultures we study, on what aspects of life we focus, and how our representations matter for the people whose lives we represent. For us, multimedia are both a tool of representation--an anthropological film, website, a field recording or photo exhibit--but also a field of inquiry by which we understand how global cultures connect with each other in the contemporary world.

Media Anthropology asks how technologies of communication work for the cultures who engage them. Brian Larkin asks what happens when Nigerians bootleg cassettes and make independent films that "trick back on" the ways the British colonists intended to disperse information using these tools. Louise Meintjes investigates the ways South African artists make what they call the sound of Africa reverberate through a recording studio run by European producers who don't value their sound. And Brad Weiss asks how Tanzanians remake images of Biggie and Tupac to work for them in the context of their contemporary lives.

As global inequality challenges African people to find new modes of survival, my research in the urban capital of Dakar, Senegal and the smaller villages from which many of its musicians originate, asks how contemporary media (digital technology, social media, video, and more) enable Senegalese artists to extend their creativity to new audiences and access critical new resources.Today, I'll trace the ways in which three kinds of media–the human voice, sound recordings in the form of cassettes and CDs, and the ever-present youtube video clip–enable Senegalese vocalists to reach home audiences in new ways and new audiences worldwide.

Touba/Muzzein

This study is drawn from my two years of fieldwork with Sufi, pop, reggae and traditional praise singers in Dakar; I had a particular interest in the musical lives of women in the region, who are known for their expertise in song and eloquence. About one month into my fieldwork there, I visited the holy Sufi pilgrimage site of Touba, where I took a field recording that marked a change in my way of thinking about media and Senegalese culture. When I heard the voice of the muzzein as he announced the call to prayer in the Sufi mosque, I became curious about how traditional knowledges involving the human voice--and the ways in which it is carried

across space and time--influence the ways Senegalese people engage contemporary technologies of recording, amplifying, producing and disseminating sound and music. I had my field recorder that day, and what I recorded was the first of many soundscapes I encountered in my time in Senegal:

(imagine this call reverberating off the tile walls around you in a private section of the holy mosque; the way it fills the space around you with the fullness of its TAMBRE; and when it attenuates with the breath of the muzzein, imagine it overlapping endlessly with the calls of countless other muzzeins, timed together to envelop the holy city and all of the Muslim world in holy sound, as call their faithful to pray with different voices, different flourishes)

Mouridya

The cultures that intersect in the Senegambia region have a special bearing on questions of voice, sound and movement. One of the main reasons I chose to initiate fieldwork there is the fact that 96% of Senegalese people count themselves amongst the global devotees of Sufi Islam, which has a special investment in practices of spiritual voicing. All the while, the ethnic peoples of the region have throughout their histories placed special currency on voice, music and traditions of eloquence. As estimated ten percent of the people of the region are griots by birth. While some families trade in metalwork, carpentry, or business, the griots trade in the power of music, voice, and language. Where once they sang praises and played drums for kings or performed deep ritual, they now teach French in schools, record pop songs, and MC wedding parties.

Contemporary religion in Senegal weaves both of these strains into a unique culture surrounding the voice and the way it is deployed. Sufism crossed the Sahara desert into Senegal

by way of Berber traders in the 16th century. Sufi Islam emphasizes a personal connection with Allah through ritual devotional practices involving voice, light and movement. In the late 19th and early 20th centuries, Senegalese scholar, poet and mystic Cheikh Amadou Bamba established a new Sufi order called Mouridya, and its holy city of Touba, where I heard the muzzein. At that time, the French had colonized Senegal to exploit its natural and human resources and had encountered great resistance amongst the peoples there.

Mouride Sufism encompasses popular, spiritual, political, indigenous, and global dimensions. Bamba led the Senegalese in a cultural and spiritual resistance against French colonialism by establishing the holy city of Touba and by teaching his followers to use the Wolof language as a common language between ethnic groups rather than the French. Bamba and the other Sufi leaders helped to establish a cultural and religious Senegalese nation that grew up from under the colonial state.

Most importantly, Bamba was known for his mystical Sufi poetry, or Xassiyda. The library in Touba is filled with his devotional writings, which librarians copy and distribute to tens of thousands of Sufi dahiras, or ritual groups, for group chanting during their weekly rituals.

A subgroup of the Mourides called Baay Fall are known both for their devotion to Cheikh Amadou Bamba and to his famous spiritual companion and best friend, Cheikh Ibrahima Fall. Today, I'll focus on the ritual voicing of the women of the Baay Fall order, called yaay fall. These praise singers sing both Bamba's Xassayid and a kind of chant called the zikr, which consist less of composed poetry than improvised call-and-response chant meant to connect the faithful directly with Allah.

Today, I will trace the voices of the Baay Fall zikr singers as they wind through global media networks.

Inspired by my experience in the holy city, I use a methodology called sensory ethnography--that's paying close attention to the way the cultural world around us sounds, looks, moves and feels-- to illuminate the musical conversation between Senegalese people at home and those abroad. I'll talk about how Mouride and Baay Fall migrant workers in the US remain connected to their Senegalese homeland by listening to digital recordings of the zikr.

Senegalese Sounded Ritual: Magal Pilgrimage 1961

The sound of the voice has always been critical to Sufism in Senegal. Here, I'm showing footage from the annual Magal pilgrimage of Mouride faithful to the holy city of Touba, which is in the remote, dry savannah of inland Senegal. This footage is from the 1961 pilgrimage just months after Senegal gained political independence from France under president Leopold Senghor, who was himself a world-renowned poet and champion of the musical arts. Here, you'll hear the Baay Fall playing the traditional Wolof drums and chanting as the faithful board the colonial trains to the holy city, and then the chanting of Cheikh Amadou Bamba's Xassayid poetry. You'll also see the tower from which the call to prayer I played earlier is issued five times daily. Imagine this city just reverberating with overlapping voices and sounds as all of these people and resources draw together for the massive ritual feast day. You can almost imagine navigating this whole scene according to the soundscape: drums, chanting, poetry, and millions of voices praying, greeting, planning and bargaining. While a visual representation of the pilgrimage scene can tell us a lot, my interest is in the relationship of sound and voices in

connecting people to their Senegalese homeland, and drawing them even closer together at ritual time.

Media Anthropology

In the last thirty years, Anthropology has turned to the relationship of sound to less visible kinds of power and mobility. In her 1981 film on the cultural lives of Senegalese people, ethnomusicologist Trinh Minh-Ha emphasizes the importance of women's voices and traditional knowledge. I'll play a clip of this film for you that was particularly inspiring to my work, in which Trinh uses sound to illustrate the life force of the people of the Senegalese countryside. This piece really go me thinking about the relationship of sound to Senegaleseness, and the ways in which these ancient practices of using and projecting the voice and the drums relate to the way Senegalese people engage contemporary media today. Given the fact that drought and economic collapse have led many of the communities Trinh worked with into the big city of Dakar and across seas and oceans to find work, I'm interested in how the kinds of cultural sounds that once reverberated throughout the villages are transmitted globally.

Mass technologies contemporary globalization--from the technologies down,

Relating cultures and technologies of communication

Marshall McLuhan, a foundational figure in media studies, tells us that media is "....any technology whatever that creates extensions of the human body and senses, from clothing to the computer."

Although the Senegalese context has already shown us that this kind of extension can be carried in very powerful ways without any electronic technology whatsoever, global media studies tends to focus very heavily on the ways in which new technologies shape the possibilities

of communication. Let's think of what focusing our study on television might lead us to think about, for instance, in our study of Senegalese culture in relationship to global movements. We would probably find that television, which featires Bollywood musicals, American cop shows, and French new programs, has brought a world of foreign ideas, aesthetics, and values INTO Senegalese culture since its introduction in the '60s and '70s. We might wonder what contemporary Senegalese culture would look like without this influence in relationship to its traditions and lifestyles. We could look at the introduction of cell phones, digital recordings and the internet in a similar light as we note how Senegalese social life has changed remarkably over time.

Sound Ecologies

Rather than focus on the ways in which media--as an agent of modernity or Americanness--revolutionize and change global cultures, I'm interested here in talking about the continuities that enable to make new technologies Senegalese. I'm thinking in terms of junctures--of bending technologies to fit the ways Senegalese people communicate with each other--instead of disjunctures that would fundamentally separate them from--or change their--Senegaleseness.

I'll show you my ten-minute film I made with women Baay Fall Sufi praise singers in Dakar, Senegal, in which I explore the ways technologies enable these Sufi singers to increase the power of their ritual voicing. This is a multimedia example of Media Anthropology, inspired by Trinh Minh-Ha's work, and I want to call attention to the ways in which these young praise singers use speakers, microphones, headphones, cell phones, and digital cameras to amplify and

record their traditional praise song, and the ways in which the sounds overlap and reverberate in much the same way as the muzzein in Touba or the women's voices in Trinh's film.

Human voices: Sokhna Khady Ba

So, in order to show the continuities between ancient Senegambian practices of sounding and voicing to the ways in which Senegalese people engage technologies today, I'll look at how the voice of one of Senegal's most respected praise singers, Sokhna Khady Ba, moves through three kinds of media: the voice itself, through the sale and trade of her CDs and cassettes, and through social media--particularly youtube, which houses a massive collection of Senegalese Sufi praise songs. I'll show how each of these technologies reaches different audiences and resources while retaining some of the core practices of Senegalese voicing.

So this first example is a field recording I made os Sokhna Khady performing at a ritual event in the streets of Dakar in 2011. This event started at about 2 in the morning and went through until about 9 a.m. And could be heard for miles in the city; as Sokhna Khady sang, she advertised the event and wrapped thousands of faithful Baay Fall in the fabric of the event. You can hear other nearby singers in the neighborhood with their own rituals going on. Some nights in Senegal, you can stand in your doorway and try to count ten or twenty of these rituals happening in the streets at any given time. The city itself becomes an amplifier for her voice as her sound resonates from the tall, smooth buildings of the city, and her words are echoed by the other singers at the ritual and passerby, who pick up her call-and-response and join in themselves. They may learn new chants from Sokna Khady that they will sing at their own rituals at a later time, or they may hear the drum rhythms that echo her words for miles away. These are ancient drums called xiin, and are a form of talking drum meant to carry the words of

the singer they support for long distances between villages. The photo here shows how Sokhna Khady holds both the main performance microphone, but also up to a dozen cell phones and digital recorders in her hands when she sings; the owners of the cell phones will circulate these recordings to other Baay Fall faithful and carry her voice even further. So as you can see, even in the customary space of ritual, Senegalese people are thinking quite critically about media and the binding force of voice.

Cassette, CD recordings

This next sample will give you a sense of how Sokhna Khady's song and voice sound when mediated in the recording studio. Her song, Modou Bamba, became a pop hit when her video debuted on Senegalese TV in 2011. Soon, her first album began to sell quickly on the streets of Dakar. The thing is, the record industry in Dakar is such that an official release was never made, and the record was never printed or distributed. Instead, Senegalese artists know that their work will be widely bootlegged and sold in the form of copied-over cassettes or burned blank CDs at the local markets, or else traded in MP3 form from cell phone to cell phone--and cell phones in Senegal nearly always come with a loud speaker setting, as the Senegalese actually encourage each other to play their music in public and social settings. Sokhna Khady's recordings are most likely to be heard wafting from the pocket of a street vendor, from the cassette deck of a taxi, or over a makeshift soundsystem before a Sufi ritual. A cassette or a CD costs the same--about 80 cents. The artists themselves don't tend to have a problem with this system, as they use their recordings for self-promotion and instead draw their income from sponsorships and large gratuities when they perform. So they pay about $60 per song to record

their albums at local pay-to-play studios, where Senegalese producers mix the songs according to what the artist wants.

Let's take a minute to listen to how Sokhna Khady's voice and praise song has been produced in the studio here, and pay special attention to the moments where her voice and sound has been polished a bit to fit the shorter pop format.

I want to consider how, in changing the medium by which Sokhna Khady's voice is heard, she is able to reach different audiences and access different resources. In the earlier field recording from the ritual, we hear her voice amplified by a series of loudspeakers and resonating from the tall mud-brick buildings of the city. Most importantly, we hear the ecstatic improvisations and interjections of Sokhna Khady, her singers, the crowd and the drummers. These become controlled in the studio, and contained in the six-minute pop format. The song has become very smooth around the edges, carefully composed to address each of the Sufi saints and topics she wants to sing about, and the call-and-response format has been limited to feature gaps in the vocals. But this doesn't mean that the recorded song, which is more often played in the course of daily secular life than in the ritual context, doesn't lend itself to the ecstatic Sufi connection with Allah. When I was in Dakar and heard this song played at the omelette stand or in the taxi, I noticed that those present often threw up their hands as if in ritual and chanted in response to Sokhna Khady--and I should note that this kind of public, enthusiastic engagement with recorded music is very common in Senegal--and, in this everyday sense, enacted their Sufi spirituality in a very different context and scale than those of the ritual context. We can imagine the ways in which Sokhna Khady and her producer shape the recording with these contexts in

mind. And they've done well--this recording increased her profile greatly, and in the last 3 years, Sokhna Khady has become the preeminent woman Sufi praise singer of Senegal.

Youtube and Social Media

The third media form I want to talk about today is that of the youtube video, a favored format for Senegalese musical artists across genres. While on one hand, we could look at youtube, the internet and social media in terms of the way they globalize and change the Senegalese cultural ecosystem, I want to pause to think about the way these globalize--while keeping INTACT--Senegalese culture as they carry Sufi voices worldwide.

Little Senegal-a neighborhood in the heart of New York's Harlem--has been home to tens of thousands of Mourides who have come to live and work since the 1980s. In the wake of economic collapse over the past decade, new communities of Senegalese flea-market traders (who often have special relationships with Chinese manufacturers), IT specialists, and taxi drivers have come to thicken the suburbs of Atlanta, Raleigh, Houston, Memphis, Virginia Beach, and Miami. These mirror long-established Mouride communities in Barcelona, Paris, Rome and Lisbon, throughout the African coast of the Mediterranean, and throughout Francophone Africa.

What's interesting about these communities is the remarkable cohesion and devotion to Sufiism they manifest. In Raleigh, the Mouride dahira meets every Sunday night in a special house dedicated to Serigne Touba. Traveling Sufi leaders come from Senegal quite often--even weekly--to lead the prayers and celebrate various rituals.

Senegalese Sufi web: These Senegalese Sufi youtube videos are most often featured on the homepages of a vast Sufi web network that connects Mouride worship groups worldwide to their home country.

Darou Khoudoss

This is a dahira website for the Mourides of Atlanta written in French, English and Wolof--wit some Arabic thrown in--, whose members can find information about upcoming Sufi events in the US and in Senegal, news, histories, and editorials from religious leaders. Most importantly, up-to-date youtube videos of religious events and chants are integrated into the site (some sites like Touba TV even include real-time video) so that these Senegalese abroad can remain connected to ritual events back home. Once a week--often on a Thursday or Sunday evening--local Mouride dahiras in the US get together and play these videos over a projector or soundsystem and integrate these chants into their worship. Because these groups are less likely to house an expert praise singer like Sokhna Khady, they chant along with these youtube videos in the course of religious ritual--this is something I witnessed many times with the Mouride community in Raleigh, where I live.

Xassayid

Here's an example of the kind of Xassayid that would be played during a ritual. It's take from a live recording of a praise singer and poet during pilgrimage time in Touba: the reverberation you hear is the sound of the singer's voice echoing against the walls of a holy temple in Touba. As the chanter chants the prayer, the video displays the writings of Cheikh

Amadou Bamba--Wolof words written with Arabic letters--so chanters abroad can follow and chant along.

Animation

This piece of animation shows how the geographic location of Touba becomes readily available to Senegalese abroad. As the animator takes us on a mystical journey through the holy city, we hear the sound of the Touba muzzein--that same praise singer I recorded during my trip to Touba--singing the call to prayer. Even from our distant placement across deserts and oceans, we can experience the reverberations of the Senegalese Sufi voice and explore the holy city. When I listen to this, I wonder if this single muzzein in the distant holy city in the desert would be at all surprised to know that his voice is being heard here at William and Mary on a Thursday night. I don't think he would!

Diaspora in Sound

So, what does this kind of media anthropology say about how we approach cultural studies? In terms of African studies, we think about the specific, local, traditional and customary practices and ways of thinking about culture moving in a way that defies stereotype. These are both changing over space and time and retaining a core of Senegaleseness that becomes strengthened in the contemporary global context.

When it comes to American studies or diaspora studies, we begin to think about the less visible ways immigrants and diasporas in the US retain their connections to distant homelands. While the processes of Americanization can sometimes be very visible when it comes to the

outward appearance and social participation of these communities, it's harder to get to those media practices that bind migrants to their homelands, to their faith and to their sites of pilgrimage and belonging. So while we concern ourselves with the question of what it means to be a member of a diaspora in America, we can think about how it feels to be situated in one place while oriented to another--on this planet of sound.

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